

**WEEK 33**

# SUNDAY

## CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Ez. 16: 3, 5b – 7a, 8 – 15a, 37a, 40 – 43, 59 – 63*

*Jerusalem unfaithful bride of God.*

**A reading from the prophet Ezekiel.**

Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem: Your origin and your birth are of the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite, and your mother a Hittite. No eye pitied you, to do any of these things to you out of compassion for you; but you were cast out on the open field, for you were abhorred, on the day that you were born.

"And when I passed by you, and saw you weltering in your blood, I said to you in your blood, 'Live, and grow up like a plant of the field.' And you grew up and became tall and arrived at full maidenhood; your breasts were formed, and your hair had grown; yet you were naked and bare.

"When I passed by you again and looked upon you, behold, you were at the age for love; and I spread my cloak over you, and covered your nakedness: yes, I plighted my troth to you and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord GOD, and you became mine. Then I bathed you with water and washed off your blood from you, and anointed you with oil. I clothed you also with embroidered cloth and shod you with leather, I swathed you in fine linen and covered you with silk. And I decked you with ornaments, and put bracelets on your arms, and a chain on your neck. And I put a ring on your nose, and earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown upon your head. Thus you were decked with gold and silver; and your raiment was of fine linen, and silk, and embroidered cloth; you ate fine flour and honey and oil. You grew exceedingly beautiful, and came to regal estate. And your renown went forth among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through the splendour which I had bestowed upon you, says the Lord GOD.

"But you trusted in your beauty, and played the harlot because of your renown, and lavished your harlotries on any passer-by.

Therefore, behold, I will gather all your lovers, with whom you took pleasure, all those you loved and all those you loathed; I will gather them

against you from every side, and will uncover your nakedness to them, that they may see all your nakedness.

They shall bring up a host against you, and they shall stone you and cut you to pieces with their swords. And they shall burn your houses and execute judgments upon you in the sight of many women; I will make you stop playing the harlot, and you shall also give hire no more. So will I satisfy my fury on you, and my jealousy shall depart from you; I will be calm, and will no more be angry. Because you have not remembered the days of your youth, but have enraged me with all these things; therefore, behold, I will requite your deeds upon your head, says the Lord GOD. "Have you not committed lewdness in addition to all your abominations?

"Yes, thus says the Lord GOD: I will deal with you as you have done, who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant, yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant. Then you will remember your ways, and be ashamed when I take your sisters, both your elder and your younger, and give them to you as daughters, but not on account of the covenant with you. I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the LORD, that you may remember and be confounded, and never open your mouth again because of your shame, when I forgive you all that you have done, says the Lord GOD."

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Is. 54: 6, 8; Ez. 16: 60*

**R:** Like an abandoned woman I have recalled you; in a burst of anger I had hidden my face from you. \* Because of my everlasting love I will have pity on you, says your redeemer.

**V:** I will remember the covenant concluded with you at the time of your youth and I will establish with you an eternal covenant.

**R:** Because of my everlasting love I will have pity on you, says your redeemer.

**Second Reading.** *Disc. 46, 13*

*The weak Christians.*

**A reading from the "Discourse on the shepherds" of St. Augustine, bishop.**

“The weak you have not strengthened” (Ez. 34: 4), says the Lord. He is speaking to the wicked shepherds, the false shepherds, those who seek their own advantage, not what is Christ’s. Happy in the benefit of milk and wool, they take no care of the sheep at all, nor heal the sick. Between the infirm in the sense of weak (for the sick are also called infirm), and the sick, the unwell, I see this difference (with greater care I can draw perhaps better distinctions between things I am trying to distinguish, and someone else with more skill or enlightenment can do better; but lest you should be deprived in the meantime, I am saying what I think as regards the words of scripture) – we must fear for the weak lest temptation come upon him and break him; but the sick man is already unwell through some evil desire, and prevented by evil desire from setting out on the way of God, from bowing under the yoke of Christ.

Observe those men who want to live a good life, are already deciding to live a good life, and yet are less capable of suffering ills than they are prepared to do good. Yet a Christian’s strength includes not only doing what is good, but also enduring what is evil. Those, then, who seem to be fervent in good works, but are unwilling, or unable to endure the sufferings that come upon them, are the weak. Those who through some evil desire are lovers of the world, and withdraw from good works, are lying sick and ill: because of the illness itself, with no strength in them, they can do no good.

Such in his soul was that paralytic whose bearers, unable to carry him into the Lord, opened the roof, and let him down. This suggests how you should be willing to open the roof and let down to the Lord your palsied soul, with its uncontrolled limbs, devoid of every good work, weighed down by its sins, and sick with the disease of its evil desires. If your limbs are all out of control, and there is palsy within you, then to reach the doctor (unseen, perhaps, and inside the house: the true sense of the scriptures is hidden), by exposing what is hidden, open the roof and let down the paralytic.

Those who do not do so, and neglect to do so, have this said to them: “The sick you have not healed; the crippled you have not bound up” (Ez. 34: 4). I have already spoken on this point. The man was broken by dread of temptation. Here is a splint to correct the fracture, I mean those consoling words, “God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it” (1 Cor. 10: 13).

**Responsorial.** 1 Cor. 9: 22-23

**R:** To the weak I displayed weakness, in order to win them over. \* Indeed, I have become everything in turn to men of every sort, so that in one way or another I might save some of them.

**V:** I do all this for the sake of the gospel, to take my part in proclaiming it.

**R:** Indeed, I have become everything in turn to men of every sort, so that in one way or another I might save some of them.

CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** 1 Mac. 4: 36 – 59

*Purification and dedication of the temple.*

**A reading from the first book of Maccabees.**

Then said Judas and his brothers, "Behold, our enemies are crushed; let us go up to cleanse the sanctuary and dedicate it." So all the army assembled and they went up to Mount Zion. And they saw the sanctuary desolate, the altar profaned, and the gates burned. In the courts they saw bushes sprung up as in a thicket, or as on one of the mountains. They saw also the chambers of the priests in ruins. Then they rent their clothes, and mourned with great lamentation, and sprinkled themselves with ashes. They fell face down on the ground, and sounded the signal on the trumpets, and cried out to Heaven. Then Judas detailed men to fight against those in the citadel until he had cleansed the sanctuary.

He chose blameless priests devoted to the law, and they cleansed the sanctuary and removed the defiled stones to an unclean place. They deliberated what to do about the altar of burnt offering, which had been profaned.

And they thought it best to tear it down, lest it bring reproach upon them, for the Gentiles had defiled it. So they tore down the altar, and stored the stones in a convenient place on the temple hill until there should come a prophet to tell what to do with them. Then they took un-hewn stones, as the law directs, and built a new altar like the former one. They also rebuilt the sanctuary and the interior of the temple, and consecrated the courts. They made new holy vessels, and brought the lamp stand, the altar of incense, and the table into the temple. Then they burned incense on the altar and lighted the lamps on the lamp stand, and these gave light in the temple.

They placed the bread on the table and hung up the curtains. Thus they finished all the work they had undertaken. Early in the morning on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, which is the month of Chislev, in the one hundred and forty-eighth year, they rose and offered sacrifice, as the law directs, on the new altar of burnt offering which they had built. At the very season and on the very day that the Gentiles had profaned it, it was dedicated with songs and harps and lutes and cymbals.

All the people fell on their faces and worshiped and blessed Heaven, who had prospered them. So they celebrated the dedication of the altar for eight days, and offered burnt offerings with gladness; they offered a sacrifice of deliverance and praise.

They decorated the front of the temple with golden crowns and small shields; they restored the gates and the chambers for the priests, and furnished them with doors.

There was very great gladness among the people, and the reproach of the Gentiles was removed. Then Judas and his brothers and all the assembly of Israel determined that every year at that season the days of dedication of the altar should be observed with gladness and joy for eight days, beginning with the twenty-fifth day of the month of Chislev.

**Responsorial.** *1 Macc. 4: 57, 56; 2 Macc.10: 38*

**R:** They adorned the front of the temple with golden crowns and celebrated the dedication of the altar; \* great was the joy of the people.

**V:** With songs and hymns of gratitude they blessed the Lord;

**R:** great was the joy of the people.

**Second Reading.** *Cat. 5 on faith and the symbol, 12 – 13*

*The symbol of faith.*

**A reading from the “Catechesis” of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, bishop.**

The faith that the Church hands down to you has all the authority of the scriptures behind it. This is the faith, and none other, which you must learn to proclaim and in which you must persevere. Our spiritual life must not be put to risk through ignorance, and since there are some who do not read the bible, either because they are too busy or because they are illiterate, the essence and core of our faith has been captured, and can be memorised, in the few short lines of the creed.

Keep this faith ever by your side to help you on your way and close your ears and have nothing to do with any other, even if I myself should change my allegiance and preach another faith to you, or an angel of darkness be transformed into an angel of light to lead you into error. ‘Even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed’ (Gal. 1: 8).

To begin with, simply take the words as they stand at their face value, put your faith in them and commit them to memory. Later, as opportunity offers, you can take the propositions one by one and study them as truths of the sacred scriptures. This summary of our faith is not a merely human composition but the more striking sayings of the scriptures have been assembled together to form one comprehensive statement. And as a small mustard seed carries within itself the potential of large branches, so the words of our creed are pregnant with the whole content of our religion as it is expressed both in the Old and the New Testament.

Pay attention then, brethren, to the truths of faith now being handed down to you and write them deep in your hearts. Keep a careful watch and be on your guard against foes and heretics intent on perverting your faith and plundering it. You must as it were deposit this gift of faith in the bank for safe keeping and God will demand of you an account of your investment. ‘In the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate bore witness to that great claim; I charge you to keep the faith unstained until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (1 Tm. 6: 13)

You have been entrusted with an immortal treasure and the Lord will require an account of it from you at the time of his appearing, and this will be made manifest at the proper time by the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who alone has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no man has ever seen or can see (1 Tm. 6: 15-16). To him be honour and eternal dominion. Amen.

**Responsorial.** *Heb. 10: 38- 39; Cfr. Hab. 2: 4*

**R:** Through faith my righteous servant shall find life; but if a man shrinks back, I can take no pleasure in him. \* We are not among those who shrink back, however; we have the faith to make life our own.

**V:** The unbeliever will be unsure of himself.

**R:** We are not among those who shrink back, however; we have the faith to make life our own.

YEAR A

**Gospel.** *Mt. 25: 14 – 30*

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

Jesus said this parable to his disciples: "For it will be as when a man going on a journey called his servants and entrusted to them his property; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away.

He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them; and he made five talents more. So also, he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.' And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.' He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed, and gather where I have not winnowed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to every one who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.'



**Third Reading. Nn. 68, 69**

*The just man sows in the spirit and therefore harvests eternal life.*

**A reading from the “Commentary on Matthew” of Origen, presbyter.**

It seems to me from this passage that the just man sowing in the spirit will harvest eternal life. In reality, God gathers everything that is sown and gathered by the just man. The just man, in fact, belongs to God, who harvests where not he but the just man has sown.

We could therefore say this: the just man has sown, has given to the poor and the Lord will gather for himself that which the just man has sown in this way.

Harvesting in fact what he has not sown and gathering that which he has not spread, he will judge as an offering to himself all the things that have been sown or spread in the poor, saying to those who have benefited their neighbour: “Come, blessed of my Father, receive in inheritance the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Because I was hungry and you gave me to eat” (Mt. 25: 34-35).

And since he wants to harvest where he has not sown and to gather where he has not spread, when he will not find anything he will say to those who have not given him this possibility: “Go away from me, with your curse upon you, to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels, because I was hungry and you did not give me to eat” (Mt. 25: 41-42).

He is truly hard, as Matthew says, and severe as Luke defines him (19: 21), but towards those who take advantage of the mercy of God for their own negligence, not in order to convert, as the Apostle reminds us: “Consider the goodness and the severity of God” (Rm. 11: 22). The negligent therefore will be treated with severity, you instead with goodness if you remain in goodness.

God is good with the one who is convinced that God is good and hopes to be forgiven if he converts to him. God instead will not be good but severe with the one who considers God as so good as to not care about the sins of men. He in fact burns with anger for the sins of the men who despise him.

If therefore the Christ will harvest that which we have sown and will gather that which we have spread, let us sow in the spirit, let us distribute our goods to the poor and let us not hide the talent of God under the earth.

This fear is not good and will not free us from the external darkness, where we will be condemned as wicked and lazy servants. Wicked for not having used the precious coin of the word of the Lord, with which we could have diffused the doctrine of Christianity and penetrated into the profound mysteries of the goodness of God. Lazy for not having traded the word of God for our salvation and the salvation of the others. We should have instead put the riches of our Lord, which are his words in the bank with listeners who, like bankers, put to the test and examine every thing in order to retain only the good and true doctrine and to repulse that which is wicked and false. In a way that, the Lord coming, could gather with the fruit and the interest, the words spread by us in the others.

In fact all riches, that is every word that bears the royal impression of God and the image of his Word, is an authentic treasure.

**Responsorial.** *2 Pet. 1: 3; Ep. 2: 10*

**R:** God has called us with his glory and power. \* Therefore, brothers, try to make your vocation and your election always firmer.

**V:** We are God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from the beginning he had meant us to live it.

**R:** Therefore, brothers, try to make your vocation and your election always firmer.

YEAR B

**Gospel.** *Mk. 13: 24 – 32*

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

Jesus said to his disciples: "But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of man coming in clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

"From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away before all these things

take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. "But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

**Third Reading. Book 4**

*There is hope even for the tree.*

**A reading from the "Commentary on Mark" of St. Bede the Venerable, presbyter.**

"In those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened and the moon will lose its brightness, and the stars will come falling from the heaven" (Mk. 13: 24). On the day of judgement the stars will appear to be dark not because their light will be diminished, but because the splendour of the true light will draw near and will arise, that is the supreme judge, when he will come in his majesty and that of the Father and of the holy angels. But in truth nothing prevents us from understanding that then truly the sun and the moon with all the other stars will be for a certain time deprived of light, as it appears to us to have happened to the sun at the time of the passion of the Lord. That prophecy with which Joel said: "The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood, before that great and terrible day of the Lord comes" (Joel 3: 4), however remains unfulfilled till today; and that also which Isaiah says about the day of judgement: "The moon will hide her face, the sun be ashamed for the Lord of hosts will be king on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and his glory will shine in the presence of his elders" (Is. 24: 23).

The day of judgement, therefore, having taken place and while the glory of the future life shines, when there will be "new heavens and a new earth" (2 Pet. 3: 13), then that which is said by the same prophet in another place will take place: "The light of the moon will be as bright as sunlight and the light of the sun will be seven times brighter, like the light of seven days in one" (Is. 30: 26 Vulg.).

"And the powers that are in the heavens will be shaken". It is not strange if men, (who by nature and intelligence are earthly) are disturbed at this judgement at the manifestation of which even the heavenly powers, that is the angelical powers, will tremble, as the blessed Job also testifies saying: "The pillars of heaven tremble, they are struck with wonder when he threatens them" (Jb. 26: 11). What will happen to the decorations when the

pillars tremble, what will the grass of the desert suffer when the cedar of paradise is shaken?

“And he will send his angels to gather his elect from the four winds, from the extremity of the earth to the extremity of heaven”. There will not remain therefore in that day any elect who will not go to meet the Lord who comes on the clouds to judge, both those who are still found alive in the body as well as those who will be resurrected from death to life. The reprobates also will come to judgement, and among them also, some will be found alive in the body, and others resurrected from death to life; but unlike the just who will be reunited for the joy of the Lord, his enemies, having been judged, will be dispersed and will disappear from the sight of God (cfr. Ps. 67: 2-3).

“Take the fig tree as a parable: as soon as its twigs grow supple and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. So with you when you see these things happening: know that he is near, at the very gates”. With the example of the tree he teaches us about when the end will come. As, when the branches of the fig tree are tender and the bud opens into a flower and the bark is filled with leaves, you understand that summer is near and the spring and the warm wind from the west which favours growth has arrived; thus, when you see these things which have been described happening, you must not believe that the end of the world has already come, but that certain announcements and premonitory signs have arrived (cfr. Mt. 24: 33) in order to show that the event is already at the doors.

But this flowering of the fig tree can also be understood, according to the mystical significance, in a more profound way; it could refer that is to the condition of the Synagogue which at one time, when the Lord came to her, not having fruits of justice in herself, was condemned to eternal sterility in those who then were unbelieving (cfr. Mt. 21: 18-19; Mk. 11: 12-14, 20-21). But since the Apostle has said: “The blindness of a part of Israel will last until the whole pagan world has entered, and then after this the rest of Israel will be saved as well” (Rm. 11: 25-26); when this time will come in which, the long blindness having been removed, the whole of Israel will obtain the light and salvation, then it will happen that the fig tree which has remained sterile for a long time (cfr. Lk. 13: 6-7) will give the fruit that it had denied according to the words of the blessed Job: “There is always hope for a tree: when felled, it can start its life again; its shoots continue to sprout. Its roots may be decayed in the earth, its stump withering in the soil,

but let it scent the water, and it buds, and puts out branches like a plant new set” (Jb. 14: 7-9). When you see all these things happening do not have any more doubts: the day of the final judgement and the summer of true peace is already near.

**Responsorial.** *Lk. 12: 35-36; Mt. 24: 42*

**R:** See that you are dressed for action and have your lamps lit: \* be like men waiting for their master to return from the wedding feast.

**V:** So stay awake, because you do not know the day in which your Lord will come.

**R:** Be like men waiting for their master to return from the wedding feast.

YEAR C

**Gospel.** *Lk. 21: 5 – 19*

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

And as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with noble stones and offerings, he said, "As for these things which you see, the days will come when there shall not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

And they asked him, "Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign when this is about to take place?" And he said, "Take heed that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name, saying, 'I am he!' and, 'The time is at hand!' Do not go after them. And when you hear of wars and tumults, do not be terrified; for this must first take place, but the end will not be at once."

Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and pestilences; and there will be terrors and great signs from heaven. But before all this they will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors for my name's sake. This will be a time for you to bear testimony. Settle it therefore in your minds, not to meditate beforehand how to answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which none of your adversaries will be able to withstand or contradict. You will be delivered up even by parents and brothers and kinsmen and friends, and

some of you they will put to death; you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives.

**Third Reading. Ps. 95: 14, 15**

*Let us not resist the first coming in order not to fear the second.*

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

“Then shall all the trees of the wood sing for joy before the Lord, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth” (Ps. 95: 12-13). First he came, and afterwards he will come again. On the first occasion these words of his resounded in the gospel: “And then you will see the Son of man coming in clouds” (Mt. 26: 64). What does the word “then” mean here? Surely the Lord will come in later days when all the peoples of the earth shall beat their breasts? First he came in the person of his preachers and he has filled the whole earth. We must not resist his first coming and then we shall not have cause to dread his second coming.

What then ought the Christian to do? He should make use of the world, and not be its slave. What does that mean? – that those who possess the world should act as though they did not. In the words of Saint Paul: “Brethren, the appointed time has grown very short: from now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the form of this world is passing away. I want you to be free from anxieties” (1 Cor. 7: 29-32). The man who is free from anxieties waits for the coming of his Lord without fear. What sort of love of Christ is it to be afraid of his coming? Brethren, are we not ashamed that we love him and yet fear his coming? Do we really love him or do we love our sins more? We should hate our sins and love him who is going to come to punish our sins. He will come, whether we like it or not. The fact that he has not come yet is no reason to think that he will not come. He will come, but when it will be you do not know. If he finds you ready, it is no disadvantage that you do not know.

“And all the trees of the wood shall sing for joy”. He came first, and afterwards he will come to judge the earth. Those who believed his first

coming he will find singing for joy that he comes.

“He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with his truth” (Ps. 95: 13). What do “righteousness” and “truth” mean? He will gather to himself his elect for judgement, but the rest he will separate apart. Some he will place on his right hand, some on his left. What is fairer, what is more right than that those who were unwilling to show mercy before the judge came should not look for mercy at his hand? But those who showed mercy will be judged with mercy. Those placed on his right hand will hear the words: “Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (cfr. Mt. 25: 34). He gives them credit for works of mercy in the words: “I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink” (Mt. 25: 35), and so on.

Again, what guilt is ascribed to those on his left hand? They are accused of having been unwilling to show mercy. What will be their faith except to depart into the eternal fire? That dread sentence will cause great wailing, but what do you read in another psalm? “The righteous will be remembered for ever; he will not be afraid of evil tidings” (Ps. 11: 6-7). “Evil tidings” here means, “Depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mt. 25: 41). The man who rejoices in good tidings will not be afraid of evil tidings. That is justice and right.

Because you are unjust, shall the judge not be just? Because you are a liar, shall not the Truth speak the truth? If you want to find the judge merciful, be merciful yourself before he comes. Forgive if anyone offends against you. Give from your riches. From whose riches do you give except from his? If you give from your own riches it would be bounty, but if you give from his, it is only a repayment. For what have you that you did not receive? (1 Cor. 4. 7) The most pleasing sacrifices to God are mercy, humility, confession, peace, love. If we bring these to God, then we shall await without fear the coming of the judge who will judge the world with righteousness and the people with his truth. (Ps. 95: 13).

**Responsorial.** *Mt. 16: 27; Ps. 95: 13*

**R:** The Son of man will come with his angels in the glory of his Father; \* he will repay every man according to his deeds.

**V:** He will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with his truth;

**R:** he will repay every man according to his deeds.





# MONDAY

## CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Ez. 17: 3 – 15, 19 – 24*

*Oracle of the ruin and restoration.*

**A reading from the prophet Ezekiel.**

You will say, Thus says the Lord GOD: A great eagle with great wings and long pinions, rich in plumage of many colours, came to Lebanon and took the top of the cedar; he broke off the topmost of its young twigs and carried it to a land of trade, and set it in a city of merchants.

Then he took of the seed of the land and planted it in fertile soil; he placed it beside abundant waters. He set it like a willow twig, and it sprouted and became a low spreading vine, and its branches turned toward him, and its roots remained where it stood. So it became a vine, and brought forth branches and put forth foliage.

"But there was another great eagle with great wings and much plumage; and behold, this vine bent its roots toward him, and shot forth its branches toward him that he might water it. From the bed where it was planted he transplanted it to good soil by abundant waters, that it might bring forth branches, and bear fruit, and become a noble vine.

Say, Thus says the Lord GOD: Will it thrive? Will he not pull up its roots and cut off its branches, so that all its fresh sprouting leaves wither? It will not take a strong arm or many people to pull it from its roots.

Behold, when it is transplanted, will it thrive? Will it not utterly wither when the east wind strikes it -- wither away on the bed where it grew?"

Then the word of the LORD came to me: "Say now to the rebellious house, do you not know what these things mean? Tell them, Behold, the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem, and took her king and her princes and brought them to him to Babylon. And he took one of the royal seed and made a covenant with him, putting him under oath. (The chief men of the land he had taken away, that the kingdom might be humble and not lift itself up, and that by keeping his covenant it might stand.)

But he rebelled against him by sending ambassadors to Egypt, that they might give him horses and a large army. Will he succeed? Can a man escape who does such things? Can he break the covenant and yet escape?

Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: As I live, surely my oath which he despised, and my covenant which he broke, I will requite upon his head. I will spread my net over him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon and enter into judgment with him there for the treason he has committed against me. And all the pick of his troops shall fall by the sword, and the survivors shall be scattered to every wind; and you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken."

Thus says the Lord GOD: "I myself will take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar, and will set it out; I will break off from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one, and I myself will plant it upon a high and lofty mountain; on the mountain height of Israel will I plant it, that it may bring forth boughs and bear fruit, and become a noble cedar; and under it will dwell all kinds of beasts; in the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest.

And all the trees of the field shall know that I the LORD bring low the high tree, and make high the low tree, dry up the green tree, and make the dry tree flourish. I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it."

**Responsorial.** *Ez. 17: 23; Mt. 13: 31, 32*

**R:** On the mountain height of Israel I will plant it, that it may bring forth boughs and bear fruit, and become a noble cedar. \* In the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest.

**V:** The kingdom of God can be compared to a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds but, once it has grown, it becomes a tree.

**R:** In the shade of its branches birds of every sort will nest.

**Second Reading.** *Disc. 46, 14 – 15*

*Be urgent in season, out of season.*

**A reading from the "Discourse on the shepherds" of St. Augustine, bishop.**

"The strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought" (Ez. 34: 4). Between the hands of robbers and the teeth of raging wolves we somehow carry on, and we ask you to pray in the face of these dangers of

ours. The sheep, too, are stubborn. Because they are sought for when they stray, they claim, as they wander and are lost, not to belong to us: “Why do you want us? Why are you looking for us?” As though their straying and being lost were not the very reason why we want them and are looking for them. “If I am astray”, says one, “if in deadly danger, why do you want me; why are you looking for me? Because you are astray, I want to bring you back; because you are lost, I want to find you. “But I want to go astray; I want to be lost”.

Do you want to be astray; do you want to be lost? How much better is my not wanting this, I am bold to say so; I am importunate. I hear the apostle saying: Preach the word, be urgent in season, out of season” (2 Tm. 4: 2). In season for whom? Out of season for whom? In season surely for the willing; out of season for the unwilling, I am importunate; I make bold to say, “You want to go astray, you want to be lost; I do not want this”. Finally the One whom I dread does not want it. If I do want it, observe what he says, take note of his rebuke, “The strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought”. Shall I fear you rather than him? We must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5: 10).

I will bring back the stray, I will seek the lost sheep. Whether you like it or not, that I will do. And if thorn bushes in the forest tear me as I seek, I will squeeze through all the narrow tracks, I will go through all the thickets; as far as the Lord whom I fear gives me strength, I will search everywhere. I will bring back the stray, I will seek out the one who is on the point of being lost. If you do not want me to suffer, do not stray, do not get lost. It is of little importance that I sorrow over you as straying and getting lost. I am afraid lest if I neglect you, I may be the death of even the strong. For observe what follows, “Even what was strong, you have slain” (cfr. Ez. 34:3). If I neglect the one straying and getting lost, the one who is strong will find pleasure in straying and losing himself.

**Responsorial.** *Sir. 4: 28-29; 2 Tm. 4: 2*

**R:** Do not remain silent when you should speak, and do not hide your wisdom, \* for wisdom is recognized in speech, and it is the tongue that gives good counsel.

**V:** Proclaim the message and, welcome or unwelcome, insist on it: refute falsehood, correct error, call to obedience, but do all with the patience that the work of teaching requires,

**R:** for wisdom is recognized in speech, and it is the tongue that gives good counsel.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *2 Mac. 12: 32 – 46*

*The expiatory sacrifice for the dead.*

**A reading from the second book of Maccabees.**

After the feast called Pentecost, they hastened against Gorgias, the governor of Idumea. And he came out with three thousand infantry and four hundred cavalry. When they joined battle, it happened that a few of the Jews fell. But a certain Dositheus, one of Bacenor's men, who was on horseback and was a strong man, caught hold of Gorgias, and grasping his cloak was dragging him off by main strength, wishing to take the accursed man alive, when one of the Thracian horsemen bore down upon him and cut off his arm; so Gorgias escaped and reached Marisa. As Esdris and his men had been fighting for a long time and were weary, Judas called upon the Lord to show himself their ally and leader in the battle. In the language of their fathers he raised the battle cry, with hymns; then he charged against Gorgias' men when they were not expecting it, and put them to flight.

Then Judas assembled his army and went to the city of Adullam. As the seventh day was coming on, they purified themselves according to the custom, and they kept the Sabbath there. On the next day, as by that time it had become necessary, Judas and his men went to take up the bodies of the fallen and to bring them back to lie with their kinsmen in the sepulchres of their fathers. Then under the tunic of every one of the dead they found sacred tokens of the idols of Jamnia, which the law forbids the Jews to wear. And it became clear to all that this was why these men had fallen. So they all blessed the ways of the Lord, the righteous Judge, who reveals the things that are hidden; and they turned to prayer, beseeching that the sin which had been committed might be wholly blotted out.

And the noble Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves free from sin, for they had seen with their own eyes what had happened because of the sin of those who had fallen. He also took up a collection, man by man, to the amount of two thousand drachmas of silver, and sent it to Jerusalem to provide for a sin offering. In doing this he acted very well and honourably, taking account of the resurrection. For if he were not expecting that those who had fallen would rise again, it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead. But if he was looking to the splendid reward that is laid up for those who fall asleep in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Therefore he made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. 2 Macc. 12: 45*

**R:** Those who fall asleep in death with the faith of the fathers, \* will have a magnificent reward.

**V:** Holy and healthy is the thought of offering an expiatory sacrifice for the dead, so that they may be absolved of their sin:

**R.** they will have a magnificent reward.

**Second Reading.** *Disc. 7, 23 – 24*

*It is truly a holy thing to pray for the dead.*

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

‘What is man that you are mindful of him?’ (Ps. 8: 5) What is this strange mystery about my nature? I am great and small, high and low, mortal and immortal, of earth and of heaven, I must be buried with Christ and rise with him again, be co-heir with Christ, become a son of God and indeed God himself.

This is what the great mystery means for us; this is why God for our sake became man and was born in poverty, so that he might raise up fallen human nature and bring salvation to man who is made in his image. He would remake mankind so that we should become one in Christ, who has become in us perfectly all that he is. There is to be no longer male, female, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free (cfr, Col. 3: 11), which are human designations and marks of discrimination. No, we are to carry only the stamp of the likeness of God by whom and for whom we were created. We

are so moulded and formed in his likeness that we are recognized only as of his family.

May we indeed be the kind of men we hope to be by the mighty mercy of our generous God. He asks little, he gives much, in this world and the next, to those who love him sincerely – to us if by our love and hope in him we bear all things, sustain all things and give thanks to him for all things (for scripture tells us that the trials of this life are often the weapons of salvation). We are also to commend our souls to him and the souls of those who have travelled the common way of humanity and arrived more promptly before us at their destination.

O God, Lord and Creator of all and especially of mankind: God, Father and ruler of your children! Arbiter of life and death, guardian and benefactor of our souls, all things are made by you and all things are transfigured and transformed by your Word when their time comes according to your wisdom and providence. Take to yourself now, I pray you, our brother Caesarius, the forerunner of us who remain. Take us also to yourself in your own good time, once our allotted span of life has been completed. May the fear of the Lord make us prepared and yet unperturbed, so that at our death we shall not be drawing back and loath to depart, not dragged and torn from this life as men enthralled by the world and the flesh but rather going out readily and willingly to the life of eternal happiness in Christ Jesus our Lord to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Ps. 102: 15*

**R:** O Lord our God, receive into your presence the souls of the dead for whom you shed your blood. \* Remember that we are dust, that the life of man is as transient as the grass or the flower of the field.

**V:** Merciful and compassionate Lord, show us your loving kindness.

**R:** Remember that we are dust, that the life of man is as transient as the grass or the flower of the field.

**Gospel.** *Lk. 18: 35 – 43*

*What do you want me to do for you? Lord, that I can see again.*

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

As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging; and hearing a multitude going by, he inquired what this meant.

They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." And he cried, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" And those who were in front 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 commanded him to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me receive my sight." And Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

## TUESDAY

### CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Ez. 18: 1 – 13, 20 – 32*

*Each one will be judged according to his own actions.*

**A reading from the prophet Ezekiel.**

The word of the LORD came to me again: "What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge'? As I live, says the Lord GOD, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. Behold, all souls are mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sins shall die.

"If a man is righteous and does what is lawful and right --if he does not eat upon the mountains or lift up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, does not defile his neighbour's wife or approach a woman in her time of impurity, does not oppress any one, but restores to the debtor his pledge, commits no robbery, gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment, does not lend at interest or take any increase, withholds his hand from iniquity, executes true justice between man and man, walks in my statutes, and is careful to observe my ordinances -- he is righteous, he shall surely live, says the Lord GOD. "If he begets a son who is a robber, a shedder of blood, who does none of these duties, but eats upon the mountains, defiles his neighbour's wife, oppresses the poor and needy, commits robbery, does not restore the pledge, lifts up his eyes to the idols, commits abomination, lends at interest, and takes increase; shall he then live? He shall not live. He has done all these abominable things; he shall surely die; his blood shall be upon himself.

The soul that sins shall die. The son shall not suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffers for the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.

"But if a wicked man turns away from all his sins which he has committed and keeps all my statutes and does what is lawful and right, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the transgressions which he has



committed shall be remembered against him; for the righteousness which he has done he shall live.

Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, says the Lord GOD, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live?

But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity and does the same abominable things that the wicked man does, shall he live? None of the righteous deeds which he has done shall be remembered; for the treachery of which he is guilty and the sin he has committed, he shall die.

"Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way not just? Is it not your ways that are not just? When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, he shall die for it; for the iniquity which he has committed he shall die. Again, when a wicked man turns away from the wickedness he has committed and does what is lawful and right, he shall save his life. Because he considered and turned away from all the transgressions which he had committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die. Yet the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not just.' O house of Israel, are my ways not just? Is it not your ways that are not just?

"Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, says the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions, lest iniquity be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of any one, says the Lord GOD; so turn, and live."

**Responsorial.** *Jer. 31: 29; Ez. 18: 20, 30*

**R:** It will not be said anymore: the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge. \* He who has sinned, and not others, must die.

**V:** I will judge everyone according to his conduct: the son will not pay for the iniquity of the father, nor the father for the iniquity of the son.

**R:** He who has sinned, and not others, must die.

**Second Reading.** *Disc. 46, 18 – 19*

*The Church like a vine, growing has spread in every place.*

**A reading from the “Discourse on the shepherds” of St. Augustine, bishop.**

“My sheep were scattered over every mountain and every hill, and over all the face of the earth” (cfr. Ez. 34:6). What is the meaning of “They were scattered over all the face of the earth”? They follow after earthly things, they love and cherish the things that glitter on the face of the earth. They are unwilling to die, that their life may be hidden with Christ. “Over all the face of the earth”, through love of earthly things, and because there are straying sheep over all the face of the earth. They are in various places; but one mother, pride, brings all forth, just as our one catholic mother brings forth all the Christian faithful spread throughout the world.

No wonder if pride brings forth division, love unity. Yet that catholic mother, and that shepherd in her, everywhere seeks out the straying, strengthens the weak, takes care of the sick, binds up the broken. They do not know one another; yet she knows them all, since she moulds them all into one with herself.

Thus she is like a vine, growing and spreading everywhere; those I have mentioned are like useless shoots, rightly cut off by the husbandman’s sickle for their sterility, pruning the vine, not cutting it down altogether. So where those shoots have been cut off, there they stay. But the vine, as it grows throughout, knows the shoots that have been trimmed in it, and those lying nearby that have been cut off.

Yet she calls back the stray; since the apostle says even about the broken branches, “God has power to graft them in again”(Rm. 11: 23). Whether you speak of sheep straying from the flock, or of branches cut off from the vine, God is no less able either to recall the sheep or to graft in the branches again; since he is the supreme shepherd, he is the true husbandman. “They were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search for them or bring them back” (Ez. 34: 6) – none from among the wicked shepherds; “There was none to search for them” – no man that is. Therefore shepherds hear the word of the Lord: “As I live, says the Lord God” (Ez. 34: 7,8). Notice from where he begins; it is a kind of oath of God, a calling to witness of his life: “As I live, says the Lord”. The shepherds are dead, but the sheep are safe: the Lord lives. “As I live, says the Lord God”. But which shepherds are dead? Those who seek their own advantage, not that of Jesus Christ. Will there be, then, and will there be

found any shepherds seeking not their own advantage but that of Jesus Christ? Certainly there will be, and certainly they will be found; they are not, nor will they be lacking.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. 2 Cor. 3: 4-6, 5*

**R:** We have confidence in God through Christ. \* It is he who made us capable of serving the new covenant that consists not of a written law, but of the Spirit.

**V:** There is nothing in us that allows us to claim that we are capable of doing this work. The capacity we have comes from God.

**R:** It is he who made us capable of serving the new covenant that consists not of a written law, but of the Spirit.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *1 Mac. 6: 1 – 17*

*The end of Antiochus.*

**A reading from the first book of Maccabees.**

King Antiochus was going through the upper provinces when he heard that Elymais in Persia was a city famed for its wealth in silver and gold. Its temple was very rich, containing golden shields, breastplates, and weapons left there by Alexander, the son of Philip, the Macedonian king who first reigned over the Greeks.

So he came and tried to take the city and plunder it, but he could not, because his plan became known to the men of the city and they withstood him in battle. So he fled and in great grief departed from there to return to Babylon.

Then some one came to him in Persia and reported that the armies which had gone into the land of Judah had been routed; that Lysias had gone first with a strong force, but had turned and fled before the Jews; that the Jews had grown strong from the arms, supplies, and abundant spoils which they had taken from the armies they had cut down; that they had torn down the abomination which he had erected upon the altar in Jerusalem; and that they had surrounded the sanctuary with high walls as before, and also Beth-zur, his city.

When the king heard this news, he was astounded and badly shaken. He took to his bed and became sick from grief, because things had not turned out for him as he had planned. He lay there for many days, because deep grief continually gripped him, and he concluded that he was dying. So he called all his friends and said to them, "Sleep departs from my eyes and I am downhearted with worry. I said to myself, 'To what distress I have come! And into what a great flood I now am plunged! For I was kind and beloved in my power.' But now I remember the evils I did in Jerusalem. I seized all her vessels of silver and gold; and I sent to destroy the inhabitants of Judah without good reason.

I know that it is because of this that these evils have come upon me; and behold, I am perishing of deep grief in a strange land." Then he called for Philip, one of his friends, and made him ruler over all his kingdom. He gave him the crown and his robe and the signet, that he might guide Antiochus his son and bring him up to be king. Thus Antiochus the king died there in the one hundred and forty-ninth year. And when Lysias learned that the king was dead, he set up Antiochus the king's son to reign. Lysias had brought him up as a boy, and he named him Eupator.

**Responsorial.** *Lk. 1: 51-52; 18: 14*

**R:** He has performed mighty deeds with his arm; he has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts, \* he has brought down rulers from their thrones, he has lifted up the humble.

**V:** Because he who exalts himself will be humbled and he who humbles himself will be exalted.

**R:** he has brought down rulers from their thrones, he has lifted up the humble.

**Second Reading.** *Part 2, 3 – 4*

*Christ the good Shepherd intercedes for us miserable ones.*

**A reading from the “Theological Confessions” of John of Fécamp, abbot.**

I thank you for the incarnation and the birth of your Son and for his glorious Mother, my Lady, through whom I am confident that I will be helped a lot by your mercy. I thank you for his passion and his cross, for his death and his resurrection, for his ascension into heaven and because he

now sits with power at your right hand. I thank you for all his teachings and his works, because with these examples he forms and educates us to lead a holy and irreprehensible life.

I thank you for that wonderful pouring out of your precious blood by which we have been redeemed, and together through the sacred saving mystery of his body and his blood, which every day nourishes us and sanctifies us in your holy Church and makes us participants of the unique highest divinity.

I thank you for your infinite mercy, Lord our God, for all the mercy with which you have deigned in such an extraordinary way to come to our help: of us, who were already lost because of sin, and saved by your same Son our redeemer, “who has been put to death for our sins and who has risen for our justification” (Rm. 4: 25). He now lives forever at your right hand interceding for us wretches, like the good shepherd and true priest who shares the sufferings of the faithful flock acquired with his blood. Together with you he has compassion, because he also is God, generated from you, coeternal and consubstantial to you in everything: therefore he can save us forever, because being God he is also omnipotent.

He himself then has been constituted by you judge of the living and the dead. You in fact do not judge anyone, but you have entrusted all judgement to the Son, in whose breast is enclosed every treasure of science and of wisdom, in order to be judge and a perfectly just and truthful witness, so that no conscience can flee from his gaze.

With difficulty will the just man save himself from his tremendous exam; and I, who am so miserable, what will I say, what will I do when I will be presented in front of his tribunal, I who have transgressed almost all his commandments? But I beg you, God the Father full of mercy, through the same eternal judge, through him who is the “victim of expiation of our sins” (1 Jn. 2: 2), grant me the contrition of heart and the gift of tears, so that the wounds of my soul may cry unceasingly, day and night, because this is the time of mercy and the day of salvation. May my many evil actions and my numerous sins, which now are hidden, not appear on the day of that tremendous judgement in front of the angels and the archangels, the prophets and the apostles, the saints and all the just men. Have mercy on me, Lord, have mercy on me, you who say: “I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked desists from his conduct and lives” (Ez. 33: 11).

**Responsorial.** *Tob. 13: 1, 2; cfr. Dan. 3: 40, 26, 42*

**R:** Blessed be God who lives forever, he punishes and uses mercy, he lowers down into the abyss of the earth and he raises up from the great perdition. \* There is no delusion for those who trust in him.

**V:** Blessed be the Lord, God of our fathers, who has dealt with us according to the greatness of his mercy.

**R:** There is no delusion for those who trust in him.

**Gospel.** *Lk. 19: 1 – 10*

*The Son of Man has come to search for and to save that which was lost.*

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

He entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector, and rich. And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not, on account of the crowd, because he was small of stature. So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for I must stay at your house today." So he made haste and came down, and received him joyfully.

And when they saw it they all murmured, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have defrauded any one of anything, I restore it fourfold." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost."

# WEDNESDAY

## CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Ez. 20: 27 – 44*

*History of the unfaithfulness of Israel.*

**A reading from the prophet Ezekiel.**

"Therefore, son of man, speak to the house of Israel and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: In this again your fathers blasphemed me, by dealing treacherously with me. For when I had brought them into the land which I swore to give them, then wherever they saw any high hill or any leafy tree, there they offered their sacrifices and presented the provocation of their offering; there they sent up their soothing odours, and there they poured out their drink offerings. (I said to them, what is the high place to which you go? So its name is called Bamah to this day.)

Wherefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: Will you defile yourselves after the manner of your fathers and go astray after their detestable things? When you offer your gifts and sacrifice your sons by fire, you defile yourselves with all your idols to this day. And shall I be inquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, says the Lord GOD, I will not be inquired of by you.

"What is in your mind shall never happen -- the thought, 'Let us be like the nations, like the tribes of the countries, and worship wood and stone.'

"As I live, says the Lord GOD, surely with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out, I will be king over you. I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out; and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I will enter into judgment with you face to face. As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you, says the Lord GOD. I will make you pass under the rod, and I will let you go in by number.

I will purge out the rebels from among you, and those who transgress against me; I will bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they shall not enter the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am the LORD.

"As for you, O house of Israel, thus says the Lord GOD: Go serve every one of you his idols, now and hereafter, if you will not listen to me; but my holy name you shall no more profane with your gifts and your idols. "For on my holy mountain, the mountain height of Israel, says the Lord GOD, there all the house of Israel, all of them, shall serve me in the land; there I will accept them, and there I will require your contributions and the choicest of your gifts, with all your sacred offerings. As a pleasing odour I will accept you, when I bring you out from the peoples, and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered; and I will manifest my holiness among you in the sight of the nations.

And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the country which I swore to give to your fathers. And there you shall remember your ways and all the doings with which you have polluted yourselves; and you shall loathe yourselves for all the evils that you have committed. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I deal with you for my name's sake, not according to your evil ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O house of Israel, says the Lord GOD."

**Responsorial.** *Ez. 20: 36, 37, 43*

**R:** As I entered into judgement with your fathers in the desert, so will I enter into judgement with you, says the Lord God. \* I will make you pass under my rod and I will let you go in by number.

**V:** There you will remember all your misdeeds and you shall loathe yourselves for all the evils that you have committed.

**R:** I will make you pass under my rod and I will let you go in by number.

**Second Reading.** *Disc. 46, 20 – 21*

*Do what they tell you to do, but do not do what they do.*

**A reading from the “Discourse on the shepherds” of St, Augustine, bishop.**

“Therefore you shepherds, hear the word of the Lord”. And what must you shepherds hear? “Thus says the Lord: Behold I am superior to the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hand” (Ez. 34: 9).



Listen and learn, sheep of God: God requires his sheep from the wicked shepherds, and from them demands an account for the death of his sheep. For he says in another place through the same prophet: “Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked man, O wicked man, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity, but you will have saved your life” (Ez. 33: 7-9).

What is this, my brothers? You see how dangerous it is to keep silent? He dies, and rightly dies; he dies in his impiety and sin; for his heedlessness kills him. He might have found the living shepherd, who says: “As I live, says the Lord”; but since he has been heedless, no warning coming from the one appointed as watchman to give warning, he will justly die, and the watchman will be justly condemned. But if, says the Lord, you tell an impious man, “You will surely die”, when I have threatened him with the sword, and he neglects to avoid the sword hanging over him, and it falls and kills him, he will die in his sin, but you have saved your life. Therefore it is my part not to keep silent; it is yours, even if I should keep silent, to listen to the words of the shepherd from Holy Scripture.

Let us see, then, since I put this forward, whether he takes the sheep from the wicked shepherds and gives them to the good shepherds. I do see him taking away the sheep from the wicked shepherds. For this is what he says: “Behold, I am superior to the shepherds, and I will require my sheep at their hands, and I will put a stop to their feeding my sheep; and the shepherds will no longer feed themselves” (Ez. 34: 10). For when I say let them feed my sheep, they feed themselves not my sheep: “I will put a stop to their feeding my sheep”.

How does he put a stop to their feeding his sheep? “Do what they say; but not what they do” (cfr. Mt. 23: 3). As though to say, “Their words are mine, their actions are their own”: when you do not do what the wicked shepherds do, they are not feeding you; but when you do what they say, I am feeding you.

**Responsorial.** *cfr. Lk. 12: 42, 43; 1 Cor. 4: 2*

**R:** Who is the trusty and reliable man whom his master will appoint as his steward? \* Happy that servant who is found at his task when the master comes.

**V:** Stewards are expected to show themselves trustworthy.

**R:** Happy the servant who is found at his task when the master comes.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *1 Mac. 9: 1 – 22*

*Judas Maccabee dies in battle.*

**A reading from the first book of Maccabees.**

When Demetrius heard that Nicanor and his army had fallen in battle, he sent Bacchides and Alcimus into the land of Judah a second time, and with them the right wing of the army. They went by the road which leads to Gilgal and encamped against Mesaloth in Arbela, and they took it and killed many people.

In the first month of the one hundred and fifty-second year they encamped against Jerusalem; then they marched off and went to Berea with twenty thousand foot soldiers and two thousand cavalry. Now Judas was encamped in Elasa, and with him were three thousand picked men. When they saw the huge number of the enemy forces, they were greatly frightened, and many slipped away from the camp, until no more than eight hundred of them were left.

When Judas saw that his army had slipped away and the battle was imminent, he was crushed in spirit, for he had no time to assemble them. He became faint, but he said to those who were left, "Let us rise and go up against our enemies. We may be able to fight them." But they tried to dissuade him, saying, "We are not able. Let us rather save our own lives now, and let us come back with our brethren and fight them; we are too few." But Judas said, "Far be it from us to do such a thing as to flee from them. If our time has come, let us die bravely for our brethren, and leave no cause to question our honour." Then the army of Bacchides marched out from the camp and took its stand for the encounter. The cavalry was divided into two companies, and the slingers and the archers went ahead of the army, as did all the chief warriors. Bacchides was on the right wing.

Flanked by the two companies, the phalanx advanced to the sound of the trumpets; and the men with Judas also blew their trumpets.

The earth was shaken by the noise of the armies, and the battle raged from morning till evening. Judas saw that Bacchides and the strength of his army were on the right; then all the stout-hearted men went with him, and they crushed the right wing, and he pursued them as far as Mount Azotus.

When those on the left wing saw that the right wing was crushed, they turned and followed close behind Judas and his men. The battle became desperate, and many on both sides were wounded and fell. Judas also fell, and the rest fled.

Then Jonathan and Simon took Judas their brother and buried him in the tomb of their fathers at Modein, and wept for him. And all Israel made great lamentation for him; they mourned many days and said, "How is the mighty fallen, the saviour of Israel!" Now the rest of the acts of Judas, and his wars and the brave deeds that he did, and his greatness, have not been recorded, for they were very many.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. 1 Macc. 4: 8, 9, 10*

**R:** Do not fear the assaults of the enemies; remember how our fathers were saved. \* Let us raise our voice to heaven, so that our God may show us his benevolence.

**V:** Remember his prodigies, against Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea.

**R:** Let us raise our voice to heaven, so that our God may show us his benevolence.

**Second Reading.** *Cc. 3, 9; 4, 15*

*We carry always and everywhere the death of Christ.*

**A reading from the treatise “On the good of Death” of St. Ambrose, bishop.**

The apostle says: ‘The world is crucified to me and I to the world’ (Gal. 6: 14). Then wishing to make it clear that the death to which he is

referring is death in this life, and a happy death too, he bids us ‘carry round the death of Jesus in our bodies: for whoever has the death of Jesus in his body, will have the life of the Lord Jesus too in his body’ (cfr 2 Cor. 4: 10).

Death then must already be active in us if life too is to be active; and by life and happiness after death, we mean life and happiness after victory, when the battle is over, when the law of the flesh is no longer at variance with the law of the mind, when there is no longer a struggle between us and our mortal flesh, but victory over the body of this death, our fallen nature. I am not sure that this death is not a higher state than life, and we have the authority of the apostle for this: ‘Death works in us but life in you’ (2 Cor. 4: 12). Think of the vast number of people who owe their life to one man’s death. And so the apostle teaches us that we must embrace Christ’s death while we are still alive in this world so that the splendour of his death may shine out in our body. This is the death that leads to happiness, by which our outer nature wastes away so that our inner nature may be renewed; (2 Cor 4:16) our earthly habitation is pulled down (cfr. 2 Cor. 5: 11) so that the gates of our heavenly home may be unlocked.

Metaphorically a man dies when he breaks away from the thralldom of the flesh and casts off its bonds, of which the Lord says to us by the prophet Isaiah: ‘loose every bond of wickedness, dissolve unjust contracts, let the oppressed go free, break all dishonesty’ (cfr. Is. 58: 6)

The Lord allowed death to make its way into our world so that guilt should come to an end; but lest human nature should perish by death he ordained the resurrection of the dead. Thus by death guilt should have an end, by the resurrection human nature should endure forever.

Death in this sense is a pilgrimage, a lifetime’s pilgrimage which none must shirk, a pilgrimage from decay to imperishable life, from mortality to immortality, from anxiety to unruffled calm. Do not be afraid of the word death: rather rejoice in the blessings that follow a happy death. What is death after all but the burial of vice, the flowering of goodness? Hence the words of scripture, ‘Let my soul die in the souls of the just’ (Nm. 23. 10), that is, let it be buried with them and so slough of its own vice and be clothed in the grace of the saints who carry round the mortification of Christ in their bodies and souls.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. 2 Tm. 2: 11- 12; Sir. 1: 23*

**R:** Here are words you may trust: if we die with him, we shall live with him; \* if we endure, we shall reign with him.

**V:** The patient man will hold out until the end, but then his joy will break out;

**R:** if we endure, we shall reign with him.

**Gospel.** *Lk. 19: 11 – 28*

*Why did you not hand over my money to a bank?*

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

As they heard these things, he proceeded to tell a parable, because he was near to Jerusalem, and because they supposed that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately. He said therefore, "A nobleman went into a far country to receive a kingdom and then return. Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten pounds, and said to them, 'Trade with these till I come.' But his citizens hated him and sent an embassy after him, saying, 'We do not want this man to reign over us.'

When he returned, having received the kingdom, he commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know what they had gained by trading. The first came before him, saying, 'Lord, your pound has made ten pounds more.' And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you have been faithful in a very little, you shall have authority over ten cities.' And the second came, saying, 'Lord, your pound has made five pounds.' And he said to him, 'And you are to be over five cities.' Then another came, saying, 'Lord, here is your pound, which I kept laid away in a napkin; for I was afraid of you, because you are a severe man; you take up what you did not lay down, and reap what you did not sow.' He said to him, 'I will condemn you out of your own mouth, you wicked servant! You knew that I was a severe man, taking up what I did not lay down and reaping what I did not sow? Why then did you not put my money into the bank, and at my coming I should have collected it with interest?' And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the pound from him, and give it to him who has the ten pounds.' And they said to him, 'Lord, he has ten pounds!' 'I tell you, that to every one who has will more be given; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. But as for these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them,

bring them here and slay them before me.'" And when he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

# THURSDAY

## CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Ez. 24:15 – 27*

*The life of the prophet is a “sign” for the people.*

**A reading from the prophet Ezekiel.**

Also the word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, behold, I am about to take the delight of your eyes away from you at a stroke; yet you shall not mourn or weep nor shall your tears run down. Sigh, but not aloud; make no mourning for the dead. Bind on your turban, and put your shoes on your feet; do not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of mourners."

So I spoke to the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died. And on the next morning I did as I was commanded. And the people said to me, "Will you not tell us what these things mean for us, that you are acting thus?" Then I said to them, "The word of the LORD came to me: Say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will profane my sanctuary, the pride of your power, the delight of your eyes, and the desire of your soul; and your sons and your daughters whom you left behind shall fall by the sword.

And you shall do as I have done; you shall not cover your lips, nor eat the bread of mourners. Your turbans shall be on your heads and your shoes on your feet; you shall not mourn or weep, but you shall pine away in your iniquities and groan to one another.

Thus shall Ezekiel be to you a sign; according to all that he has done you shall do. When this comes, then you will know that I am the Lord GOD.' "And you, son of man, on the day when I take from them their stronghold, their joy and glory, the delight of their eyes and their heart's desire, and also their sons and daughters, on that day a fugitive will come to you to report to you the news. On that day your mouth will be opened to the fugitive, and you shall speak and be no longer dumb. So you will be a sign to them; and they will know that I am the LORD."

**Responsorial.** *Ez. 24: 24; Joel 2: 13*

**R:** Thus shall Ezekiel be to you a sign; according to all that he has done you shall do, \* and you will know that I am the Lord.

**V:** Rend your clothes and not your garments, return to the Lord your God,

**R:** and you will know that I am the Lord.

**Second Reading.** *Disc. 46, 24 – 25, 27*

*I will pasture me sheep in lush pastures.*

**A reading from the “Discourse on the shepherds” of St. Augustine, bishop.**

“I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the heights of Israel” (Ez. 34: 13). He has set up the authors of the divine scriptures as the heights of Israel. Feed there to feed safely. Whatever you hear from that source, savour it well. Whatever is outside, reject. Lest you should go astray in the mist, listen to the shepherd’s voice. Gather together on the mountains of Holy Scripture. There are your heart’s delights; there is nothing poisonous there, nothing you should not eat; its pastures are of the richest. Only come in good health, feed in good health on the heights of Israel.

“By the fountains and in all the inhabited places of the country” (Ez. 34: 13 Vulg.). For from the mountains, which we have pointed out, flowed down the streams of the gospel proclamation, since “their sound has gone forth to all the earth” (cfr. Ps. 18: 5), and every inhabited place of the earth has been made glad and fertile for the feeding of the sheep.

“I will feed them with good pasture, and upon the heights of Israel. And their shelters shall be there” (Ez. 34: 14), where they may rest, that is, where they may say, “It is well”; where they may say, “It is true, it is obvious; we are not deceived”. As if in their shelters, they will rest in the glory of God. “They will sleep”, that is, take their rest, “and repose in the midst of delights”.

“And on fat pastures they shall feed on the mountains of Israel” (Ez. 34: 14). I have already spoken of the mountains of Israel, the good mountains, whither we raise our eyes that help may come to us from there. “But our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth” (Ps. 123: 8). Therefore to prevent our hope being in the mountains, good as they are, after he had said, “I will feed my sheep on the mountains of Israel”, and



again to stop you from staying on the mountains, he added immediately, “I will feed my sheep” (Ez. 34: 15). Raise your eyes to the mountains, whence help will come to you; but attend to his words, “I will feed”. For your help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.

He concludes thus, “And I will feed them with judgement” Ez. 34: 16). Notice that he alone so feeds them, with judgement. For what man passes judgement on his fellowman? Rash judgements are everywhere. One we have despaired of suddenly changes and becomes excellent. A man of whom we have anticipated much suddenly fails and becomes very bad. Neither our fear nor our love has any certainty.

What each man is today, he himself scarcely knows. Yet he has some idea of what he is today. But what he will be tomorrow, not even he himself knows. So then, the Lord feeds with judgement, distributing to all according to their condition: one thing to one man, another to another; this or that, to all their due. He knows what he is doing. With judgement he feeds those whom he redeemed after being judged himself. He himself, then, feeds with judgement.

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

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

**V:** I myself will search for my sheep, I will find them for myself. I shall rescue them from every kingdom, recover them from every land, and bring them back to their own country where they will find pasture.

**R:** I know my sheep and they know me.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *Dn. 1: 1 – 21*

*The faithfulness of the young Israelites in the palace of the king of Babylon.*

**A reading from the prophet Daniel.**

In the third year of the reign of Jehoi'akim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoi'akim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god.

Then the king commanded Ash'penaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, youths without blemish, handsome and skilful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to serve in the king's palace, and to teach them the letters and language of the Chalde'ans.

The king assigned them a daily portion of the rich food which the king ate, and of the wine which he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were to stand before the king. Among these were Daniel, Hanani'ah, Mish'a-el, and Azari'ah of the tribe of Judah. And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Belteshaz'zar, Hanani'ah he called Shadrach, Mish'a-el he called Meshach, and Azari'ah he called Abed'nego.

But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's rich food, or with the wine which he drank; therefore he asked the chief of the eunuchs to allow him not to defile himself.

And God gave Daniel favour and compassion in the sight of the chief of the eunuchs; and the chief of the eunuchs said to Daniel, "I fear lest my lord the king, who appointed your food and your drink, should see that you were in poorer condition than the youths who are of your own age. So you would endanger my head with the king." Then Daniel said to the steward whom the chief of the eunuchs had appointed over Daniel, Hanani'ah, Mish'a-el, and Azari'ah; "Test your servants for ten days; let us be given vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance and the appearance of the youths who eat the king's rich food be observed by you, and according to what you see deal with your servants." So he hearkened to them in this matter, and tested them for ten days. At the end of ten days it was seen that they were better in appearance and fatter in flesh than all the youths who ate the king's rich food.

So the steward took away their rich food and the wine they were to drink, and gave them vegetables. As for these four youths, God gave them learning and skill in all letters and wisdom; and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

At the end of the time, when the king had commanded that they should be brought in, the chief of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar. And the king spoke with them, and among them all none was found like Daniel, Hanani'ah, Mish'a-el, and Azari'ah; therefore they stood before the king. And in every matter of wisdom and understanding

concerning which the king inquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters that were in all his kingdom. And Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Dan. 1: 17, 20*

**R:** God granted wisdom and intelligence to these young men; \* God confirmed their hearts with the gift of his spirit.

**V:** In every matter of wisdom and understanding concerning which the king inquired of them, he found them prepared.

**R:** God confirmed their hearts with the gift of his spirit.

**Second Reading.** *Cc. 1, 1 – 2,7*

*Christ wanted to save all that was being ruined.*

**A reading from the “Homily” of a second century author.**

Brethren, we must always remember that Jesus Christ is God, the judge of the living and the dead, and we must not underestimate the significance of our salvation, because this would be to circumscribe our hope of glory. It is a sin to regard the message of our salvation as trivial and we too share this guilt whenever we do not realize whence we were called and who called us and to what place he called us and what patience and endurance Jesus Christ showed in saving us.

What recompense then can we make to him or what worthy return for all he has given us? What debt of service do we not owe him? He gave us the true light, he addressed us as sons, he saved us from death. How can we adequately praise him or make any adequate response to his generosity? We were like mentally handicapped people as we worshipped sticks and stones, gold and silver and bronze, the work of men’s hands, and our whole life was one long death. But he rescued us from the darkness and blindness that enveloped us and thanks to him we recovered our sight. For he pitied us as he watched us stumbling to our death with no hope of safety other than himself and he led us back to the right path of salvation. He called us when we were nothing and from nothing made us what we are.

‘Rejoice, O barren one who do not bear; break forth and shout, you who are not in travail; for the deserted wife has more children than she who has a husband’ (Cfr. Is. 54: 1). When Isaiah says, ‘Rejoice, O barren one

who do not bear', he is referring to us, the Church, because the Church was barren until God gave her children. When he says, 'shout, you who are not in travail', he tells us not to grow weary like women in labour but to pray to God with all your heart. When he says, 'for the deserted wife has more children than she who has a husband', he reminds us that our people once seemed deserted by God but now they have come to believe and they outnumber the nations who thought they had God on their side.

Another sentence from scripture says, 'I did not come to call the virtuous but sinners' (Mt. 9: 13), that is, it is his task to save those about to perish. It is a marvellous thing for anyone to support not those who are on their feet but those already falling to their destruction. Christ did this when he showed himself ready to save those on the point of perishing, and did in fact save many when he came and called us back from death.

**Responsorial.** *1 Th. 5: 9-10; Col. 1: 13*

**R:** God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, \* so that we might live for him.

**V:** He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and given us a place in the kingdom of his beloved Son,

**R:** so that we might live for him.

**Gospel.** *Lk. 19: 41 – 44*

*If you had understood the way of peace!*

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

And when he drew near and saw the city he wept over it, saying, "Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But now they are hid from your eyes. For the days shall come upon you, when your enemies will cast up a bank about you and surround you, and hem you in on every side, and dash you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave one stone upon another in you; because you did not know the time of your visitation."



# FRIDAY

## CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Ez. 28: 1 – 19*

*Oracle against Tyre, proud city.*

**A reading from the prophet Ezekiel.**

The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, say to the prince of Tyre, Thus says the Lord GOD: "Because your heart is proud, and you have said, 'I am a god, I sit in the seat of the gods, in the heart of the seas,' yet you are but a man, and no god, though you consider yourself as wise as a god -- you are indeed wiser than Daniel; no secret is hidden from you; by your wisdom and your understanding you have gotten wealth for yourself, and have gathered gold and silver into your treasuries; by your great wisdom in trade you have increased your wealth, and your heart has become proud in your wealth -- therefore thus says the Lord GOD: "Because you consider yourself as wise as a god, therefore, behold, I will bring strangers upon you, the most terrible of the nations; and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom and defile your splendour.

They shall thrust you down into the Pit, and you shall die the death of the slain in the heart of the seas. Will you still say, 'I am a god,' in the presence of those who slay you, though you are but a man, and no god, in the hands of those who wound you? You shall die the death of the uncircumcised by the hand of foreigners; for I have spoken, says the Lord GOD."

Moreover the word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, raise a lamentation over the king of Tyre, and say to him, Thus says the Lord GOD: "You were the signet of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering, carnelian, topaz, and jasper, chrysolite, beryl, and onyx, sapphire, carbuncle, and emerald; and wrought in gold were your settings and your engravings. On the day that you were created they were prepared.

With an anointed guardian cherub I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was

found in you. In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned; so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God, and the guardian cherub drove you out from the midst of the stones of fire. Your heart was proud because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendour. I cast you to the ground; I exposed you before kings, to feast their eyes on you.

By the multitude of your iniquities, in the unrighteousness of your trade you profaned your sanctuaries; so I brought forth fire from the midst of you; it consumed you, and I turned you to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all who saw you. All who know you among the peoples are appalled at you; you have come to a dreadful end and shall be no more for ever."

**Responsorial.** *Is. 14: 11, 19; Ez. 28: 17*

**R:** Your splendour and the music of your harps have precipitated into the underworld. \* You have been thrown out of your sepulchre, like a despicable shoot.

**V:** Your heart had become proud because of your beauty, your wisdom was corrupted because of your splendour, I have thrown you to earth.

**R:** You have been thrown out of your sepulchre, like a despicable shoot.

**Second Reading.** *Disc. 46, 29 – 30*

*The good shepherds in the unique Shepherd.*

**A reading from the “Discourse on the shepherds” of St. Augustine, bishop.**

Christ, then, feeds you with judgement (Ez. 34: 16); he distinguishes his own sheep from those that are not his. “Those who are my sheep”, he says, “hear my voice and follow me” (Jn. 10: 27).

Here I find all good shepherds in the one shepherd. Good shepherds are not lacking, but they are in the one. To speak of many implies division. Here one is proclaimed because their unity is being commended. If there is silence at this point about shepherds, and the one shepherd is mentioned, it is not because the Lord has not found anyone to whom to entrust his sheep. But he entrusted them at the time we read of, because he found Peter: indeed, in Peter himself he recommended unity. There were many apostles, but to one he said, “Feed my sheep” (Jn. 21: 17). Away with the notion that

good shepherds are lacking at present; let us not entertain the idea; may the Lord's mercy never fail to produce and appoint them.

Surely if there are good sheep, there are good shepherds too, for good shepherds are made from good sheep. But all good shepherds are in the one, are all one reality. Let them feed the sheep – it is Christ who feeds them. The friends of the bridegroom rejoice because of the bridegroom's voice. So he is feeding the sheep when they feed them; and he says, "I feed," since in them is his voice, his love. When he entrusted his sheep to Peter, as one to another, he wished to make him one with himself, and so to entrust the sheep to him as to be himself the head, while Peter assumed the figure of the body, that is of the Church, that like bridegroom and bride they might be two in one flesh.

What, then, does he first say to Peter, in order to entrust the sheep to him yet avoid entrusting them as if to another? "Peter, do you love me?" And he answered, "I do love you". And again, "do you love me?" And he answered, "I do love you". And a third time, "Do you love me?" And he answered, "I do love you" (cfr. Jn. 21: 15-17). He makes sure of love so as firmly to establish unity. So he, the one shepherd, feeds his sheep in these shepherds, and they in the one.

Scripture is both silent about shepherds, and not silent at the same time. The shepherds boast, but whoever boasts, let him make his boast in the Lord (2 Cor. 10: 17). Christ is feeding the sheep; they are feeding them for Christ and in Christ. It was not because of a scarcity of shepherds (as though the prophet were foretelling bad times to come) that he said, "I will feed my sheep", I have no one to whom to entrust them. Even when Peter himself was alive, and the apostles were still alive in the flesh, he, the one in whom alone all are one reality, said: "I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; them also I must bring, that there may be one flock and one shepherd" (Jn. 10: 16).

So let them all be in the one shepherd, and speak with the one shepherd's voice, for the sheep to hear, and to follow their shepherd, not any at random, but the one. All should in him speak with the one voice, and not with different voices. "I beseech you, brethren, that you all say the same thing, and there be no division among you" (1 Cor. 1: 10). Let the sheep hear this voice, cleared of all division and cleansed of all heresy, and let them follow their shepherd as he says, "Those who are my sheep hear my voice and follow me" (Jn. 10: 27).



**Responsorial.**

**R:** Good shepherd, always unsleeping, ever on the watch, \* do not desert your flock.

**V:** Lord, mercifully watch over us to keep away our enemy, the crafty tempter;

**R:** do not desert your flock.

CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *Dn. 2: 26 – 47*

*Dream of the statue broken by the small stone.*

*The eternal kingdom of God.*

**A reading from the prophet Daniel.**

The king said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshaz'zar, "Are you able to make known to me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation?" Daniel answered the king, "No wise men, enchanter, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery which the king has asked, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. Your dream and the visions of your head as you lay in bed are these: To you, O king, as you lay in bed came thoughts of what would be hereafter, and he who reveals mysteries has made known to you what is to be. But as for me, not because of any wisdom that I have more than all the living has this mystery been revealed to me, but in order that the interpretation may be made known to the king, and that you may know the thoughts of your mind. "You saw, O king, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening. The head of this image was of fine gold, its breast and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it smote the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces; then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and

became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

"This was the dream; now we will tell the king its interpretation. You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the sons of men, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the air, making you rule over them all -- you are the head of gold. After you shall arise another kingdom inferior to you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things; and like iron which crushes, it shall break and crush all these. And as you saw the feet and toes partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom; but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, just as you saw iron mixed with the miry clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle.

As you saw the iron mixed with miry clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay. And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand for ever; just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be hereafter. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure." Then King Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and did homage to Daniel, and commanded that an offering and incense be offered up to him. The king said to Daniel, "Truly, your God is God of gods and Lord of kings, and a revealer of mysteries, for you have been able to reveal this mystery."

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Dan. 2: 44; Lk. 20: 17, 18*

**R:** The God of heaven will make a kingdom that will never be destroyed again: it will shatter and destroy all the other kingdoms. \* The Kingdom of God will last forever.

**V:** The stone which the builders have rejected, has become the corner stone; it will crush the one on whom it falls.

**R:** The Kingdom of God will last forever.

**Second Reading.** Cc. 3, 1 – 4, 5; 7, 1 – 6

*We know God through the testimony of life.*

**A reading from the “Homily” of a second century author.**

In this especially God has shown compassion to us, that we are alive and have not sacrificed to dead gods or worshipped them but through Christ have come to know the Father of truth. What is this knowledge? It means not denying Christ through whom we know the Father. The Lord himself says: ‘Everyone who acknowledges me, before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father’ (Mt. 10: 32). This is our reward, to acknowledge him who saves us. But how do we acknowledge him? By doing what he tells us to do and not turning a deaf ear to his commands; by honouring him not only with our lips but with our whole heart and soul. As it is written in the book of Isaiah: ‘This people honours me with their lips but their heart is far from me’ (Is. 29: 13).

It is not enough then merely to address him as Lord. Words alone will not save us. For he says: ‘Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord, will be saved but he who does what is right’ (cfr: Mt. 7: 21). We must acknowledge him, brethren, not only in words but in the conduct of our lives, by loving one another, by not committing adultery, by avoiding calumny and jealousy, by living lives of self-control, pity and genuine goodness. We must be compassionate to one another and avoid avarice. This is the kind of life by which we acknowledge him. Finally we must not be afraid of men but of God. God scrutinizes our lives then and says: ‘If you are gathered to me with my own and do not obey my commands, I will cast you from me and say to you: Depart from me, I do not know where you come from, you workers of iniquity’ (cfr. Mt. 7: 23; Lk. 13: 27).

Let us move forward then unflinchingly, brethren, to face the contest before us. We know that many compete in the secular games but that few win the victor’s crown, only those good competitors who have exerted themselves to the full. Let us compete so that all of us may win the crown. Let us run along the straight course in the contest for immortality; let us enter in great numbers, all of us looking for the crown. And if we do not all attain it, let us at least come near to it. We must remember that those who take part in secular games are flogged and thrown out of the stadium if they

cheat. What if there is any cheating in the contest for immortality? What will the penalty be? Well, God says of those who have not guarded their seal, 'their worm will not die and the fire will not be extinguished and all flesh shall see them' (Is. 66: 24).

**Responsorial.** *1 Thes. 1: 9- 10; 1 Jn. 2: 28*

**R:** You turned from idols to be servants of the living and true God, and to wait expectantly for the appearance from heaven of his Son, whom he raised from the dead: \* Jesus, our deliverer from the terrors of judgement to come.

**V:** Even now, my children, dwell in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming:

**R:** Jesus, our deliverer from the terrors of judgement to come.

**Gospel.** *Lk. 19: 45 – 48*

*You have made of my house a den of thieves.*

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

And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold, saying to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer'; but you have made it a den of robbers." And he was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people sought to destroy him; but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people hung upon his words.

# SATURDAY

## CYCLE 1

**First Reading.** *Ez. 34: 1 – 6, 11- 16, 23 - 31*

*Israel is the flock.*

**A reading from the prophet Ezekiel.**

The word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say to them, even to the shepherds, Thus says the Lord GOD: Ho, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves! Should not shepherds feed the sheep? You eat the fat, you clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fatlings; but you do not feed the sheep. The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the crippled you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the wild beasts. My sheep were scattered, they wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill; my sheep were scattered over all the face of the earth, with none to search or seek for them.

"For thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I, I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock when some of his sheep have been scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. And I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the fountains, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them with good pasture, and upon the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and on fat pasture they shall feed on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the crippled, and I will strengthen the weak, and the fat and the strong I will watch over; I will feed them in justice.

And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken. "I will make with them a covenant of peace and banish wild beasts from the land, so that they may dwell securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. And I will make them and the places round about my hill a blessing; and I will send down the showers in their season; they shall be showers of blessing. And the trees of the field shall yield their fruit, and the earth shall yield its increase, and they shall be secure in their land; and they shall know that I am the LORD, when I break the bars of their yoke, and deliver them from the hand of those who enslaved them. They shall no more be a prey to the nations, nor shall the beasts of the land devour them; they shall dwell securely, and none shall make them afraid.

And I will provide for them prosperous plantations so that they shall no more be consumed with hunger in the land, and no longer suffer the reproach of the nations. And they shall know that I, the LORD their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are my people, says the Lord GOD. And you are my sheep, the sheep of my pasture, and I am your God, says the Lord GOD."

**Responsorial.** *Ez. 34: 31, 15; Jn. 10: 14*

**R:** You, my sheep, are the flock of my pasture and I am your God: \* I myself will lead my sheep to pasture and I will give them rest.

**V:** I am the good shepherd, I know my sheep, and my sheep know me.

**R:** I myself will lead my sheep to pasture and I will give them rest.

**Second Reading.** *Book. 2, Hom. 4, 19 – 20*

*He became flesh in order to spiritualise us.*

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

We would like to consider who we are, who are dealing with these arguments. It is certain that we descend from the pagans and that our forefathers worshipped idols of wood and of stone. From where therefore does so much light that is able to penetrate into those mysteries of the prophet Ezekiel, so profound that not even the Hebrews have known how to explain them as yet, come to us?

Let us give thanks therefore to that unique one who realized with his life all that was written of him in the Sacred Scriptures, so that, that which could not be understood by simple listening, could instead be clarified by seeing him. In the Scriptures certainly is contained the incarnation, the passion, the death and the resurrection of Christ. But who among us would have been able to believe these things by listening to them, if we had not known the facts?

The lion of the tribe of Judah, as it is read in the Apocalypse of John, opened therefore the sealed book which no one was able to open, or to read, revealing to us with his passion and resurrection all the mysteries contained in it. And he took upon himself the evils of our weakness, he showed us the goods of his power and of his glory. In fact he became flesh in order to make us spiritual. In his goodness he lowered himself in order to lift us up. He came out in order to make us enter. He appeared visibly in order to show us the invisible things. He suffered the scourging in order to heal us. He bore insults and derisions in order to free us from the eternal shame. He died in order to give back life to us.

Let us therefore give thanks to him, dead and giver of life, and all the more giver of life because dead. Therefore Isaiah who had contemplated well our salvation and his passion, said: "The Lord will rise to do the deed, his extraordinary deed, to work his work, his mysterious work" (Is. 28: 21). The work of God in fact is to draw to himself the souls that he has created and to recall them to the bliss of the eternal light. But to be scourged and covered with spittle, to be crucified, to die and to be buried, this in substance is not the work of God, but the work of sinful man, who merits all these things for his sin. But "he bore our sins in his body, on the wood of the cross" (1 Pet. 2: 24). He, who in his nature remains incomprehensible, in our nature wanted to let himself be taken and scourged, because if he had not taken on himself that which belonged to our weakness, he would not have been able to raise us up to the power of his strength. Therefore, in order to do his work, he accomplished an extraordinary work; in order to

carry out his purpose he worked an unusual fact, because, being God, he incarnated himself in order to elevate us up to his justice; for us he deigned to let himself be beaten like a sinful man. He did therefore an unusual work, foreign to himself, in order to fulfil his work: since by the fact that he suffered he bore our evils, he carried us his creatures to the glory of his power, in which he lives and reigns with God the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit forever and ever. Amen.

**Responsorial.** *Heb. 2: 16, 17; cfr. Bar. 3: 38*

**R:** For it was not the angels that Christ took to himself, he took to himself descent from Abraham \* It was essential that he should in this way become completely like his brothers, in order that he could be compassionate and be able to atone for human sins.

**V:** Our God has appeared on earth and has lived amongst men.

**R:** It was essential that he should in this way become completely like his brothers, in order that he could be compassionate and be able to atone for human sins.

## CYCLE 2

**First Reading.** *Dn. 3: 8 – 12, 19 – 30*

*The golden statue of the king. The youth taken out of the furnace.*

**A reading from the prophet Daniel.**

Therefore at that time certain Chalde'ans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. They said to King Nebuchadnezzar, "O king, live for ever! You, O king, have made a decree, that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image; and whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace.

There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed'nego. These men, O king, pay no heed to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up."

Then Nebuchadnezzar was full of fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed'nego. He ordered the



furnace heated seven times more than it was wont to be heated. And he ordered certain mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed'nego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. Then these men were bound in their mantles, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were cast into the burning fiery furnace. Because the king's order was strict and the furnace very hot, the flame of the fire slew those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed'nego. And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed'nego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace; they walked in the midst of the flames, they praised God and blessed the Lord.

Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He said to his counsellors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They answered the king, "True, O king." He answered, "But I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."

Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace and said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed'nego, servants of the Most High God, come forth, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed'nego came out from the fire.

And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counsellors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men; the hair of their heads was not singed, their mantles were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. Nebuchadnezzar said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed'nego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set at nought the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.

Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed'nego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins; for there is no other god who is able to deliver in this way." Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed'nego in the province of Babylon.

**Responsorial.** *Cfr. Dan. 3: 49, 50, 95*

**R:** The angel of the Lord kept the flames of the furnace away from Azariah and his companions; \* Thus the fire did not touch them at all, it did not molest them at all.

**V:** Blessed be God, who has sent his angel and has freed his servants who trusted in him.

**R:** Thus the fire did not touch them at all, it did not molest them at all.

**Second Reading.** *Cc. 8, 1 – 9, 11*

*Sincere conversion.*

**A reading from the “Homily” of a second century author.**

While we are still in this world, let us always be learning to repent. We are like clay in the hands of the craftsman and just as a potter shapes and reshapes a vessel he is making if it gets misshapen or broken, but does not occupy himself with it anymore once he has put it in the kiln, so it is with us. While we are in this world, we must take every opportunity of repentance for our sins. Our salvation depends on it. Once we have left the world, it is no longer possible to confess one's sins or to be sorry for them.

Brethren, if we do the Father's will and lead chaste lives and keep the Lord's commands, then eternal life will be ours. The Lord says in the gospel: 'If you did not look after a small thing, who will put you in charge of a big one? For I tell you that he who is faithful in small things, will be faithful in big things also' (cfr. Lk. 16: 10, 11). He says to us then, Lead a chaste life and keep the seal without blemish, and you will receive the gift of life.

And let none of you say that this flesh does not rise again for judgement. I ask you, in what circumstances did you receive sight and salvation except in the days of this flesh? We must guard our flesh then as God's temple. As you were called in the flesh, so your coming to judgement will be in the flesh. Christ the Lord who saved us was first of all spirit and then became flesh and called us in the flesh. And so we shall receive our reward in the flesh.

Let us love one another then so that all of us may reach the kingdom of God. While there is still time and opportunity for a cure, let us put ourselves in the hands of God, our physician, and acknowledge his care for us. How shall we acknowledge it? – by repentance from a sincere heart. Nothing escapes his watchful eye and he can search our hearts. Let us praise him then not only with our lips but from the heart so that he may give us a father's welcome. As the Lord said: 'These are my brothers who do the will of my Father' (cfr. Lk. 8: 21).

**Responsorial.** *Ez. 18: 31- 32; 2 Pet. 3: 9*

**R:** Throw off the load of your past misdeeds; get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. \* These are the Lord's own words: I have no desire for any man's death.

**V:** The Lord is very patient with you, because it is not his will for any to be lost, but for everyone to come to repentance.

**R:** These are the Lord's own words: I have no desire for any man's death.

**Gospel.** *Lk. 20: 27 – 40*

*He is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*

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

There came to him some Sadducees, those who say that there is no resurrection, and they asked him a question, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife but no children, the man must take the wife and raise up children for his brother. Now there were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and died without children; and the second and the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died. Afterward the woman also died. In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife." And Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage; but those who are accounted worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they cannot die any more, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him."

And some of the scribes answered, "Teacher, you have spoken well." For they no longer dared to ask him any question.