

WEEK 4

SUNDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Ap. 12: 1-18*

The sign of the woman.

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

[Rev 12:1] And a great portent appeared in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars;

[Rev 12:2] she was with child and she cried out in her pangs of birth, in anguish for delivery.

[Rev 12:3] And another portent appeared in heaven; behold, a great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads.

[Rev 12:4] His tail swept down a third of the stars of heaven, and cast them to the earth. And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to bear a child, that he might devour her child when she brought it forth;

[Rev 12:5] she brought forth a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron, but her child was caught up to God and to his throne,

[Rev 12:6] and the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, in which to be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.

[Rev 12:7] Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought,

[Rev 12:8] but they were defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven.

[Rev 12:9] And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world -- he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

[Rev 12:10] And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God.

[Rev 12:11] And they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they loved not their lives even unto death.

[Rev 12:12] Rejoice then, O heaven and you that dwell therein! But woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!"

[Rev 12:13] And when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had borne the male child.

[Rev 12:14] But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time.

[Rev 12:15] The serpent poured water like a river out of his mouth after the woman, to sweep her away with the flood.

[Rev 12:16] But the earth came to the help of the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed the river which the dragon had poured from his mouth.

[Rev 12:17] Then the dragon was angry with the woman, and went off to make war on the rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus. And he stood on the sand of the sea.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Ap. 12: 11-12: 2 Mac. 7: 36*

R: They have won through the blood of the Lamb and the testimony of their martyrdom; they have despised life to the point of death. *Rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them, alleluia.

V: After a brief suffering, they have obtained the inheritance of eternal life from God.

R: Rejoice, O heavens, and you who dwell in them, alleluia.

Second Reading. *Nm. 1-3*

The Church is in Christ as a sacrament or sign of the intimate union with God.

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

Christ is the Light of nations. Because this is so, this Sacred Synod gathered together in the Holy Spirit eagerly desires, by proclaiming the Gospel to every creature, to bring the light of Christ to all men, a light brightly visible on the countenance of the Church. Since the Church is in

Christ like a sacrament or as a sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race, it desires now to unfold more fully to the faithful of the Church and to the whole world its own inner nature and universal mission. This it intends to do following faithfully the teaching of previous councils. The present-day conditions of the world add greater urgency to this work of the Church so that all men, joined more closely today by various social, technical and cultural ties, might also attain fuller unity in Christ.

The eternal Father, by a free and hidden plan of His own wisdom and goodness, created the whole world. His plan was to raise men to a participation of the divine life. Fallen in Adam, God the Father did not leave men to themselves, but ceaselessly offered helps to salvation, in view of Christ, the Redeemer "who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature". All the elect, before time began, the Father "foreknew and pre-destined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that he should be the firstborn among many brethren". He planned to assemble in the holy Church all those who would believe in Christ. Already from the beginning of the world the foreshadowing of the Church took place. It was prepared in a remarkable way throughout the history of the people of Israel and by means of the Old Covenant. In the present era of time the Church was constituted and, by the outpouring of the Spirit, was made manifest. At the end of time it will gloriously achieve completion, when, as is read in the Fathers, all the just, from Adam and "from Abel, the just one, to the last of the elect," will be gathered together with the Father in the universal Church.

The Son, therefore, came, sent by the Father. It was in Him, before the foundation of the world, that the Father chose us and predestined us to become adopted sons, for in Him it pleased the Father to re-establish all things. To carry out the will of the Father, Christ inaugurated the Kingdom of heaven on earth and revealed to us the mystery of that kingdom. By His obedience He brought about redemption. The Church, or, in other words, the kingdom of Christ now present in mystery, grows visibly through the power of God in the world. This inauguration and this growth are both symbolised by the blood and water which flowed from the open side of a crucified Jesus, and are foretold in the words of the Lord referring to His death on the Cross: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself". As often as the sacrifice of the cross in which "Christ our

Passover was sacrificed", is celebrated on the altar, the work of our redemption is carried on, and, in the sacrament of the eucharistic bread, the unity of all believers who form one body in Christ is both expressed and brought about. All men are called to this union with Christ, who is the light of the world, from whom we go forth, through whom we live, and toward whom our whole life strains.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Ap. 21: 2; 5: 8-9; 14: 3; Ps. 47: 2*

R: I saw the New Jerusalem, adorned and made beautiful by the prayers of the saints. * All the saints sang the new song: alleluia, alleluia.

V: Great is the Lord and worthy of all praise in the city of our God, on his holy mountain.

R: All the saints sang the new song: alleluia, alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Act. 12: 1-23*

Peter in prison is freed by an angel.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

[Acts 12:1] About that time Herod the king laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church.

[Acts 12:2] He killed James the brother of John with the sword;

[Acts 12:3] and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread.

[Acts 12:4] And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people.

[Acts 12:5] So Peter was kept in prison; but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.

[Acts 12:6] The very night when Herod was about to bring him out, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the door were guarding the prison;

[Acts 12:7] and behold, an angel of the Lord appeared, and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his hands.

[Acts 12:8] And the angel said to him, "Dress yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your mantle around you and follow me."

[Acts 12:9] And he went out and followed him; he did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.

[Acts 12:10] When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened to them of its own accord, and they went out and passed on through one street; and immediately the angel left him.

[Acts 12:11] And Peter came to himself, and said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."

[Acts 12:12] When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.

[Acts 12:13] And when he knocked at the door of the gateway, a maid named Rhoda came to answer.

[Acts 12:14] Recognizing Peter's voice, in her joy she did not open the gate but ran in and told that Peter was standing at the gate.

[Acts 12:15] They said to her, "You are mad." But she insisted that it was so. They said, "It is his angel!"

[Acts 12:16] But Peter continued knocking; and when they opened, they saw him and were amazed.

[Acts 12:17] But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, "Tell this to James and to the brethren." Then he departed and went to another place.

[Acts 12:18] Now when day came, there was no small stir among the soldiers over what had become of Peter.

[Acts 12:19] And when Herod had sought for him and could not find him, he examined the sentries and ordered that they should be put to death. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and remained there.

[Acts 12:20] Now Herod was angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; and they came to him in a body, and having persuaded Blastus, the king's chamberlain, they asked for peace, because their country depended on the king's country for food.

[Acts 12:21] On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and made an oration to them.

[Acts 12:22] And the people shouted, "The voice of a god, and not of man!"

[Acts 12:23] Immediately an angel of the Lord smote him, because he did not give God the glory; and he was eaten by worms and died.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Act. 12: 7*

R: Get up, put on your garments: cloth yourself with strength to save the peoples *because the chains have fallen from your hands. Alleluia.

V: An angel of the Lord appeared to him and the cell was filled with light; he touched the side of Peter, woke him up and said: Get up, quickly:

R: because the chains have fallen from your hands. Alleluia.

Second Reading. *Disc. 352, 2*

You cannot choose a new life, if you do not repent of the past one.

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

In the Sacred Scriptures we find a triple consideration on the need of doing penance. No one in fact validly draws near to the baptism of Christ, in which all sins are remitted, without doing penance for the past life. Because no one chooses a new life if not he who has repented of the past one. That the baptised have to do penance, we have to also confirm with the authority of the sacred books.

When the Holy Spirit who was promised was sent, and the Lord rewarded the faith in his promise, it is noted that the disciples began to speak in all the languages, so much so that every one of those present there recognised their own language.

Amazed at this miracle, they asked the apostles how they were to behave.

Then Peter exhorted them to adore the one whom they had crucified and to drink with faith his blood that they had shed with cruelty.

As soon as Jesus Christ our Lord was announced to them and they had recognised their own crime, that which had been foretold by the prophet was fulfilled: I have converted in my pain, while a thorn pierced me (cfr. Ps. 31: 4 Vulg): they were filled with compunction. They converted in the travail of their pain, while the remembrance of sins pierced them like a thorn. They did not in fact think that they had committed evil until the

Scripture penetrated into them and, on the word of Peter, “they felt their hearts pierced”.

When therefore the thorn of remembrance filled them with so much compunction that they asked the apostles: “What must we do?” Peter answered: “Repent and each one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of your sins” (Act. 2: 37-38).

The first penance is therefore to desire baptism and to have thirst. There is then another daily one. Where can we learn it? I do not know where it is shown better than in the daily oration with which the Lord taught us to pray, indicating to us what we should say to the Father, with these words: “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Mt. 6: 12).

There is a more serious and afflictive penance, to which are called in the Church the true and real penitents, moving away even from the participation to the sacrament of the altar, because receiving them unworthily they may not eat and drink their own condemnation. The fault is serious: perhaps he has committed adultery or homicide or some sacrilege; the thing is serious, serious is the wound, lethal, mortifying. But the doctor is omnipotent.

Responsorial. *1 Th. 1: 9, 10; 1 Jn. 2: 28*

R: You have converted to God, and become servants of the real, living God, and are waiting for Jesus, his Son, whom he raised from the dead to come from heaven * to save us from the retribution which is coming, alleluia.

V: Live in Christ, then, my children, so that when he appears, we may have full confidence, and not turn from him in shame at his coming

R: to save us from the retribution that is coming, alleluia.

YEAR A

Gospel. *Jn. 10: 1-10*

I am the gate of the sheep.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 10:1] "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber;
[John 10:2] but he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.
[John 10:3] To him the gatekeeper opens; the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.
[John 10:4] When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.
[John 10:5] A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."
[John 10:6] This figure Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.
[John 10:7] So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.
[John 10:8] All who came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not heed them.
[John 10:9] I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.
[John 10:10] The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

Third Reading. *Hom. 14, 3-6*

Christ, the good shepherd.

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

“I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep”, that is I love them, “and my sheep know me” (Jn. 10: 14). It is as if to say openly: they return the love of the one who loves them. The knowledge always precedes the love of the truth. Ask yourselves, dearest brothers, if you are sheep of the Lord, if you know him, if you know the light of truth. I speak not only of the knowledge of the faith, but also of that of love; not only of believing, but also of operating. The evangelist John, in fact, explains: “He who says: I know God, and does not observe his commandments, is a liar” (1 Jn. 2: 4).

For this in this same passage the Lord immediately adds: “as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I offer my life for the sheep” (Jn. 10: 15). It is as if he says expressly: this is what shows that I know the Father

and am known by the Father, because I offer my life for my sheep; that is I demonstrate in what measure I love the Father by the love with which I die for the sheep.

Of these sheep he again says: “My sheep listen to my voice and I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life” (Jn. 10: 27-28). Of them he had said a little earlier: “If anyone enters through me, he will be saved; he will enter and go out and he will find pastures” (Jn. 10: 9). He will enter that is in faith, he will go out from the faith to vision, from the act of believing to contemplation, and he will find pasture in the eternal banquet. His sheep will find pastures, because whoever follows him with a simple heart is nourished with an eternally fresh food. Which are the pastures of these sheep, if not the intimate joys of paradise, that is eternal spring? The pasture of the elect is the presence of the face of God, and while it is contemplated without fear of losing it, the soul satisfies itself without end of the food of life.

Let us search, therefore, dearest brothers, these pastures, in which we can rejoice in the company of many fellow citizens. The same joy of those who are happy attracts us. Let us revive, brothers, our spirit. Let the faith in that which we have believed fill us with enthusiasm. Let our desires be inflamed for the superior goods. In a way that to love will already be a journey.

Let no contrariety take us away from the joy of the interior feast, so that if someone desires to reach the established destination, no difficulty of the journey will restrain him.

Let no prosperity seduce us with its illusions, because foolish is the traveller who during his journey stops to look at the beautiful fields and forgets to go there where he had intended to arrive.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Jn. 10: 14: 15; 1 Cor. 5: 7*

R: The good shepherd, who has given his life for his sheep, is risen. * He has offered himself to death out of love for his sheep, alleluia.

V: Christ, our Passover, has been immolated.

R: He has offered himself to death out of love for his sheep, alleluia.

YEAR B

Gospel. *Jn. 10: 11-18*

The good shepherd offers his life for his sheep.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 10:11] I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

[John 10:12] He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.

[John 10:13] He flees because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep.

[John 10:14] I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me,

[John 10:15] as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

[John 10:16] And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd.

[John 10:17] For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again.

[John 10:18] No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father."

Third Reading. *Disc. 6*

*The Shepherd has come from the heavens
in order to lead back the lost sheep to the pastures of life.*

A reading from the "Discourses" of St. Peter Chrysologus, bishop.

That with Christ the good Shepherd has come on the earth he himself says: "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd offers his life for the

sheep” (Jn. 10: 11). He is also the master, who goes in search of companions and collaborators in order to heal the entire world, and he says: “Acclaim the Lord, all of you of the earth” (Ps. 99: 2).

Therefore, having to go back up to heaven, he entrusted his sheep to Peter, so that he could guide them in his place: “Peter, do you love me? Feed my lambs”: and in order not to disturb with an authoritarian form the fragile beginning of a return, but to sustain him with goodness, he repeats: “Peter, do you love me? Feed my sheep”. He recommends the sheep, he recommends their offspring, because the shepherd knew that his sheep would be fertile. “Peter, do you love me? Feed my lambs” (cfr. Jn. 21: 15-17). To these lambs Paul, the colleague of the shepherd Peter, gave abundant milk, saying: “I have given you milk to drink, not a solid nourishment” (1 Cor. 3: 2) having heard this the holy king David, therefore exclaimed: “The Lord is my shepherd: I lack nothing; in meadows of green grass he makes me rest, to tranquil waters he leads me” (Ps. 22: 1-2).

To the one who returns to the pastures of the evangelical peace after a lot of groaning of war, after a sad life of blood, the following verse announces the joy of service. Man was a slave of sin, he was a prisoner of death, enchained by vices. And to this wicked master he gave a miserable service. When was man not sad under sin? When did he not cry under the dominion of death? When did he not despair, oppressed by the load of vices, or of crimes? Therefore he gave the last gasps, while he bore such a cruel master.

When therefore the prophet saw us free, having returned to the obedience to the Creator, to the grace of the Father, to the voluntary service of the unique good Master, justly he exclaimed: “Serve the Lord in joy, present yourselves to him with exultation” (Ps. 99: 2): he had removed all that blames and gives remorse, he gave back grace and innocence.

“We are his people and the flock of his pasture” (Ps. 99: 3). It is confirmed many times in the Scriptures that a shepherd would come from the Heavens, who would recall the wandering sheep, that were reduced to a bad state by infected pastures, in order to lead them with supreme joy to the pastures of life. “Enter into his doors with the confession” (Vulg): only the confession makes us enter through the door of faith.

“Enter into his doors with hymns of thanks, his courts with songs of praise; praise him, bless his name” (Ps. 99: 4): that name by which we have been saved and to which “every knee will bend, in the heavens, on the earth

and under the earth” (Phil. 2: 10). Because the Lord is good, eternal is his mercy” (Ps. 99: 5).

Truly sweet is his mercy: uniquely for them, he is worthy to cancel the bitterest sentence of condemnation of the entire world. “Behold the Lamb of God, behold he who takes away the sins of the world!” (Jn. 1: 29).

Responsorial. *Ez. 34: 12, 13, 14; Jn. 10: 10*

R: I will gather my sheep from all the places where they have been dispersed in the mist and darkness, and I will lead them into their land; * I will feed them on green pastures, alleluia.

V: I have come so that they may have life and have it in abundance;

R: I will feed them on green pastures.

Or.

Third Reading. *Book 9, 83, 3- 85, 2*

Christ was the good shepherd up to the point of giving his life for us.

A reading from the “Pedagogy” of Clement of Alexandria.

We who are sick, have need of the Saviour: lost, we need his guidance; blind, we need him who brings us to the light; thirsty, we have need of the spring of life, from which he who drinks will not be thirsty anymore; dead, we have need of the life; sheep, of the shepherd; children, of the pedagogy; in brief, all of our human nature needs Jesus.

If you want, you can understand the total wisdom that the most holy shepherd and master, the omnipotent Word of the Father, teaches us, when making use of the allegory he proclaims himself the shepherd of the sheep. And also the pedagogy of the children; in fact, addressing himself to the shepherds of Israel, he describes his just and healing kindness through the mouth of Ezekiel. I will bind the wounded sheep, I will cure those who are sick, I will lead those that are lost back to the sheepfold and I will pasture them on my holy mountain (cfr. Ez. 34: 16). Behold the promises of the good shepherd.

He feeds us children therefore like sheep. Yes, O Lord, nourish us with the pastures of your justice. O master, pasture your sheep on your holy mountain: the Church that is on high, surpasses the clouds, touches the heavens. “I will be their shepherd, he says, and I will be in the midst of them” (cfr. Ez. 34: 24).

He wants to save my flesh re-clothing me with the tunic of incorruptibility, for this he has consecrated my body. “Before you invoke me, I will answer you” (Is. 65: 24). You have answered my prayer much sooner than I expected, Lord. And if they go out on the street they will not fall, says the Lord. We will not fall into corruption, because we are brought back to incorruptibility by he himself who holds us by our hand (cfr. Ps. 36: 24). He himself has said this, he himself has wanted this. Such is our Pedagogue, truly good. I have not come he said, “to be served, but to serve” (Mk. 10: 45). For this in the gospel it is said that he who had toiled for us, promising also “to give his own life as a ransom for many” (Mk. 10: 45), was “tired” (Jn. 4: 6). He demonstrates in this way that he only is the good shepherd. Generous and magnificent is he who arrives to the point of giving his life for us. Truly at the service of men and full of goodness, he who could have been the Lord of man, wanted to be his brother. Good up to the point of dying for us!

Responsorial. *Cfr. Ez. 37: 21, 22, 24; Jn. 10: 16*

R: Behold, I will gather the Israelites and they will no longer be two nations. I will make of them only one people in my land: * And there will be only one shepherd for everyone, alleluia.

V: And I have other sheep that are not of this sheepfold; these also do I have to lead and they will become only one flock.

R: And there will be only one shepherd for everyone, alleluia.

Or.

Third Reading. *Disc. 26, 2*

*The good shepherd has accepted death for his sheep
not because he was forced, but spontaneously.*

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

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd offers his life for the sheep” (Jn. 10: 11). Pilate has known this Shepherd, the Jews have known him, placed on the cross for the flock. The throng of the prophets also, announcing before the passion all that which was painful that had to

happen, knew him: "He was like a lamb led to the slaughter, like a dumb sheep in front of its shearers he did not open his mouth" (Is. 53: 7).

The Shepherd offered himself for his sheep like the sheep offers its neck for the slaughter: he did not refuse death and did not threaten his executioners with death. He has not been forced to the passion, but he accepted death spontaneously for the sheep. "I have the power of offering my life and the power of taking it up again" (Jn. 10: 18). With the destruction he atoned for destruction, with death he brought the remedy to death, with the tomb he destroyed the tomb, he removed the nails and knocked down the foundations of hell. For a long time death reigned, until Christ took it on himself. For a long time the sadness of the tomb and the slavery of prison remained, until when the Shepherd humiliating himself carried to the sheep that was a prisoner the happy announcement of liberation. The underworld saw him issue the order of the return; they saw him renew the appeal to life from the kingdom of death. "The good shepherd offers his life for the sheep" (Jn. 10: 11). In this way he prepared to make friends with the sheep.

Now, he who welcomes with attention the words of Christ, loves him. The Shepherd knows how to separate the goats from the sheep: "All the nations will be reunited in front of him, and he will separate one from the other, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those who are on his right: Come, blessed of my Father, receive in inheritance the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world": what is the reward with this calling? "Because I was hungry and you gave me to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome" (Mt. 25: 32-35). In fact, those who give to me, will receive the reward from me. For them I am naked, stranger, pilgrim, poor: the gift is for them, mine however is the grace. I am tormented in their supplication. Before the judgement, he precedes the Judge with gifts. He gives him an occasion to use benevolence, he offers him the reason of forgiveness, so that he need not fear the hard words that "he will say to those placed on his left: Away from me, cursed, into the eternal fire, prepared for the devil and for his angels": Which misdeeds condemns us together with the devil? "Because I was hungry and you did not give me to eat; I was thirsty and you did not give me to drink; I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me" (Mt. 25: 41-43).

Who sends away his own shepherd hungry? Who despises the future judge, now naked? Who condemns to thirst the judge of the universe? Christ has known how to let himself be conquered by the hands and by the gifts of the poor, he has known how to forgive the long torments for a small service. Let us extinguish the fire with mercy, let us open the hearts of each other to mercy, in communion with one another like God in Christ, to whom be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.

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

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

V: Behold, I myself will search for my sheep and I will take care of them; I will take them out from the nations and I will gather them from all the regions.

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

YEAR C

Gospel. *Jn. 10: 27 –30*

I give eternal life to my sheep.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 10:27] My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me;

[John 10:28] and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.

[John 10:29] My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

[John 10:30] I and the Father are one."

Third Reading. Book 8. 13-16

*The natural unity of the faithful in God through the incarnation of the Word
and the sacrament of the Eucharist.*

A reading from the treatise “On the Trinity” of St. Hillary, bishop.

For if in truth the Word has been made flesh and we in very truth receive the Word made flesh as food from the Lord, are we not bound to believe that He abides in us naturally, Who, born as a man, has assumed the nature of our flesh now inseparable from Himself, and has conjoined the nature of His own flesh to the nature of the eternal Godhead in the sacrament by which His flesh is communicated to us? For so are we all one, because the Father is in Christ and Christ in us.

Whosoever then shall deny that the Father is in Christ naturally must first deny that either he is himself in Christ naturally, or Christ in him, because the Father in Christ and Christ in us make us one in them. Hence, if indeed Christ has taken to Himself the flesh of our body, and that Man Who was born from Mary was induced Christ, and we indeed receive in a mystery the flesh of His body — (and for this cause we shall be one, because the Father is in Him and He in us), — how can a unity of will be maintained, seeing that the special property of nature received through the sacrament is the sacrament of a perfect unity?

He therefore Himself is in us through the flesh and we in Him, whilst together with Him our own selves are in God.

Now how it is that we are in Him through the sacrament of the flesh and blood bestowed upon us, He Himself testifies, saying, And the world will no longer see Me, but you shall see Me; because I live you shall live also; because I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. If He wished to indicate a mere unity of will, why did He set forth a kind of gradation and sequence in the completion of the unity, unless it were that, since He was in the Father through the nature of Deity, and we on the contrary in Him through His birth in the body, He would have us believe that He is in us through the mystery of the sacraments? And thus there might be taught a perfect unity through a Mediator, whilst, we abiding in Him, He abode in the Father, and as abiding in the Father abode also in us; and so we might arrive at unity with the Father, since in Him Who dwells naturally in the Father by birth, we also dwell naturally, while He Himself abides naturally in us also. Again, how natural this unity is in us He has Himself testified on

this wise, — He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. For no man shall dwell in Him, save him in whom He dwells Himself, for the only flesh which He has taken to Himself is the flesh of those who have taken His. Now He had already taught before the sacrament of this perfect unity, saying, As the living Father sent Me, and I live through the Father, so he that eats My flesh shall himself also live through Me. So then He lives through the Father, and as He lives through the Father in like manner we live through His flesh. For all comparison is chosen to shape our understanding, so that we may grasp the subject of which we treat by help of the analogy set before us. This is the cause of our life that we have Christ dwelling within our carnal selves through the flesh, and we shall live through Him in the same manner as He lives through the Father. If, then, we live naturally through Him according to the flesh, that is, have partaken of the nature of His flesh, must He not naturally have the Father within Himself according to the Spirit since He Himself lives through the Father? And He lives through the Father because His birth has not implanted in Him an alien and different nature inasmuch as His very being is from Him yet is not divided from Him by any barrier of an unlikeness of nature, for within Himself He has the Father through the birth in the power of the nature.

Responsorial. *Jn. 6: 56, 58; cfr. Deut. 4: 7*

R: He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me and I in him. *
This is the bread that has descended from heaven, alleluia.

V: No nation in the world has its divinity so close to it, as the Lord our God is close to us.

R: This is the bread that has descended from heaven, alleluia.

MONDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Ap. 13: 1-18*

The two beasts.

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

[Rev 13:1] And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems upon its horns and a blasphemous name upon its heads.

[Rev 13:2] And the beast that I saw was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority.

[Rev 13:3] One of its heads seemed to have a mortal wound, but its mortal wound was healed, and the whole earth followed the beast with wonder.

[Rev 13:4] Men worshiped the dragon, for he had given his authority to the beast, and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who can fight against it?"

[Rev 13:5] And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months;

[Rev 13:6] it opened its mouth to utter blasphemies against God, blaspheming his name and his dwelling, that is, those who dwell in heaven.

[Rev 13:7] Also it was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. And authority was given it over every tribe and people and tongue and nation,

[Rev 13:8] and all who dwell on earth will worship it, every one whose name has not been written before the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain.

[Rev 13:9] If any one has an ear, let him hear:

[Rev 13:10] If any one is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if any one slays with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

[Rev 13:11] Then I saw another beast which rose out of the earth; it had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon.

[Rev 13:12] It exercises all the authority of the first beast in its presence, and makes the earth and its inhabitants worship the first beast, whose mortal wound was healed.

[Rev 13:13] It works great signs, even making fire come down from heaven to earth in the sight of men;

[Rev 13:14] and by the signs which it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast, it deceives those who dwell on earth, bidding them make an image for the beast which was wounded by the sword and yet lived;

[Rev 13:15] and it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast so that the image of the beast should even speak, and to cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain.

[Rev 13:16] Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead,

[Rev 13:17] so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.

[Rev 13:18] This calls for wisdom: let him who has understanding reckon the number of the beast, for it is a human number, its number is six hundred and sixty-six.

[Rev 13:1] And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems upon its horns and a blasphemous name upon its heads.

[Rev 13:2] And the beast that I saw was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority.

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[Rev 13:18] This calls for wisdom: let him who has understanding reckon the number of the beast, for it is a human number, its number is six hundred and sixty-six.

Responsorial. *Ap. 3: 5; Mt. 10: 22*

R: The victor will be clothed in white garments, I will not cancel his name from the book of life: * and I will recognise him in front of my Father and in front of his angels, alleluia.

V: He who perseveres to the end will be saved;

R: and I will recognise him in front of my Father and in front of his angels, alleluia.

Second Reading. *C. 15, 33-36*

The Spirit gives life.

A reading from the treatise “On the Holy Spirit” of St. Basil the Great, bishop.

The Lord who gives us life established with us the baptismal covenant, which carries upon it the image of death and life. The water is symbolic of death while the Spirit provides the seal of life. This solves the problem that was raised as to why water and Spirit are connected. It results from the fact that baptism has two purposes: first the destruction of the body of sin to prevent it bearing fruit in death, second, life in the Spirit and the fruit borne in holiness. The water is the symbol of death and receives the body as it were into a tomb; the Spirit gives life-giving force and brings back our souls from the death of sin to the life they once enjoyed. This is the meaning of being born again of water and the Holy Spirit; death is brought to an end in the water and then the Spirit brings us to life.

By three immersions and as many invocations the great mystery of baptism is performed. So the appearance of death is conveyed, and through the handing over of the divine knowledge the baptised are enlightened. Therefore if there is any grace in the water it is not because of any power the water may possess but derives from the presence of the Spirit. For baptism is not a removal of dirt from the body but an appeal to God from a clear conscience. For this reason the Lord, to prepare us for the risen life, lays before us all the Gospel precepts. We must avoid anger, endure evil, be free from the love of pleasure and the love of money. So shall we by our own choice achieve those things that are the natural endowments of the world to come.

Through the Holy Spirit paradise is restored; we can ascend to heaven and regain our sonship. We can address God as our Father with confidence, we can share in the grace of Christ, we can be called children of the light and sharers in eternal glory; in a word we can become full of all manner of blessings in this world and in that to come. We can observe as in a glass the beauty of the goods stored up for us in the future but now anticipated in faith, as though they were already here. If the earnest is such, what must the perfect thing be? If the first fruits are such, what must the consummation be?

Responsorial.

R: Like the dove, foreboding peace, left the ark and flew over the waters of the flood, so also from heaven, seat of the Church prefigured in the ark, the Giver of the divine peace, * the Holy Spirit descends on the water to free those who are baptised from the ancient sin, alleluia.

V: Marvellous sacrament of the water! Here men are reborn free for eternal life:

R: the Holy Spirit descends on the water to free those who are baptised from the ancient sin, alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Act. 12: 24- 13:14a*

The sending of Paul and Barnabas in mission.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

[Acts 12:24] But the word of God grew and multiplied.

[Acts 12:25] And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, bringing with them John whose other name was Mark.

CHAPTE

R 13

[Acts 13:1] Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyre'ne, Man'a-en a member of the court of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

[Acts 13:2] While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

[Acts 13:3] Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

[Acts 13:4] So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleu'cia; and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

[Acts 13:5] When they arrived at Sal'amis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John to assist them.

[Acts 13:6] When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they came upon a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet, named Bar-

Jesus.

[Acts 13:7] He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.

[Acts 13:8] But El'ymas the magician (for that is the meaning of his name) withstood them, seeking to turn away the proconsul from the faith.

[Acts 13:9] But Saul, who is also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him

[Acts 13:10] and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?

[Acts 13:11] And now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind and unable to see the sun for a time." Immediately mist and darkness fell upon him and he went about seeking people to lead him by the hand.

[Acts 13:12] Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had occurred, for he was astonished at the teaching of the Lord.

[Acts 13:13] Now Paul and his company set sail from Paphos, and came to Perga in Pamphyl'ia. And John left them and returned to Jerusalem;

[Acts 13:14] but they passed on from Perga and came to Antioch of Pisid'ia.

Responsorial. *Act. 13: 32, 33; cfr. Jdt. 13: 14*

R: The promise made to the fathers has been fulfilled, God has fulfilled it for us, their children * raising Jesus. Alleluia, alleluia.

V: The Lord our God fulfilled all that he had promised to the house of Israel

R: raising Jesus. Alleluia, alleluia.

Second Reading. *C. 3, 28*

*Christ, through the Apostles, has made their successors
participants of his consecration and his mission.*

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

Christ, whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world, has through His apostles, made their successors, the bishops, partakers of His

consecration and His mission. They have legitimately handed on to different individuals in the Church various degrees of participation in this ministry. Thus the divinely established ecclesiastical ministry is exercised on different levels by those who from antiquity have been called bishops, priests and deacons. Priests, although they do not possess the highest degree of the priesthood, and although they are dependent on the bishops in the exercise of their power, nevertheless they are united with the bishops in sacerdotal dignity. By the power of the sacrament of Orders, in the image of Christ the eternal high Priest, they are consecrated to preach the Gospel and shepherd be faithful and to celebrate divine worship, so that they are true priests of the New Testament. Partakers of the function of Christ the sole Mediator, on their level of ministry, they announce the divine word to all. They exercise their sacred function especially in the eucharistic worship or the celebration of the Mass by which acting in the person of Christ and proclaiming His Mystery they unite the prayers of the faithful with the sacrifice of their Head and renew and apply in the sacrifice of the Mass until the coming of the Lord the only sacrifice of the New Testament namely that of Christ offering Himself once for all a spotless Victim to the Father. For the sick and the sinners among the faithful, they exercise the ministry of alleviation and reconciliation and they present the needs and the prayers of the faithful to God the Father. Exercising within the limits of their authority the function of Christ as Shepherd and Head, they gather together God's family as a brotherhood all of one mind, and lead them in the Spirit, through Christ, to God the Father. In the midst of the flock they adore Him in spirit and in truth. Finally, they labour in word and doctrine, believing what they have read and meditated upon in the law of God, teaching what they have believed, and putting in practice in their own lives what they have taught.

Priests, prudent co-operators with the Episcopal order, its aid and instrument, called to serve the people of God, constitute one priesthood with their bishop although bound by a diversity of duties. Associated with their bishop in a spirit of trust and generosity, they make him present in a certain sense in the individual local congregations, and take upon themselves, as far as they are able, his duties and the burden of his care, and discharge them with a daily interest. And as they sanctify and govern under the bishop's authority, that part of the Lord's flock entrusted to them they make the universal Church visible in their own locality and bring an

efficacious assistance to the building up of the whole body of Christ. Intent always upon the welfare of God's children, they must strive to lend their effort to the pastoral work of the whole diocese, and even of the entire Church. On account of this sharing in their priesthood and mission, let priests sincerely look upon the bishop as their father and reverently obey him. And let the bishop regard his priests as his co-workers and as sons and friends, just as Christ called His disciples now not servants but friends. All priests, both diocesan and religious, by reason of Orders and ministry, fit into this body of bishops and priests, and serve the good of the whole Church according to their vocation and the grace given to them.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Is. 63: 11; Ep. 4: 11-12*

R: The Lord remembers his people; he makes them come out with the shepherd of his flock, * and he places in the depths of their hearts his Holy Spirit, alleluia.

V: It is he who has established shepherds and masters, to render the brothers capable of fulfilling the ministry of edifying the body of Christ,

R: and he places in the depths of their hearts his Holy Spirit, alleluia

Gospel. *Jn. 10: 1-10*

I am the gate of the sheepfold.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 10:1] "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door but climbs in by another way, that man is a thief and a robber;

[John 10:2] but he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.

[John 10:3] To him the gatekeeper opens; the sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

[John 10:4] When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice.

[John 10:5] A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."

[John 10:6] This figure Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

[John 10:7] So Jesus again said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep.

[John 10:8] All who came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not heed them.

[John 10:9] I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.

[John 10:10] The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

Or in Year A

Gospel. *Jn. 10: 11-18*

The good shepherd offers his life for his sheep.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 10:11] I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

[John 10:12] He who is a hireling and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees; and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.

[John 10:13] He flees because he is a hireling and cares nothing for the sheep.

[John 10:14] I am the good shepherd; I know my own and my own know me,

[John 10:15] as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

[John 10:16] And I have other sheep, that are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will heed my voice. So there shall be one flock, one shepherd.

[John 10:17] For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again.

[John 10:18] No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I

have received from my Father."

TUESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Ap. 14: 1-13*

The new song for the victorious Lamb.

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

[Rev 14:1] Then I looked, and lo, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.

[Rev 14:2] And I heard a voice from heaven like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder; the voice I heard was like the sound of harpers playing on their harps,

[Rev 14:3] and they sing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who had been redeemed from the earth.

[Rev 14:4] It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are chaste; it is these who follow the Lamb wherever he goes; these have been redeemed from mankind as first fruits for God and the Lamb,

[Rev 14:5] and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are spotless.

[Rev 14:6] Then I saw another angel flying in midheaven, with an eternal gospel to proclaim to those who dwell on earth, to every nation and tribe and tongue and people;

[Rev 14:7] and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God and give him glory, for the hour of his judgment has come; and worship him who made heaven and earth, the sea and the fountains of water."

[Rev 14:8] Another angel, a second, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who made all nations drink the wine of her impure passion."

[Rev 14:9] And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If any one worships the beast and its image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand,

[Rev 14:10] he also shall drink the wine of God's wrath, poured unmixed into the cup of his anger, and he shall be tormented with fire and sulphur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

[Rev 14:11] And the smoke of their torment goes up for ever and ever; and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name."

[Rev 14:12] Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

[Rev 14:13] And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Write this: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord henceforth." "Blessed indeed," says the Spirit, "that they may rest from their labors, for their deeds follow them!"

Responsorial. *Ap. 14: 6, 7*

R: I saw an angel flying in the midst of heaven and it cried out with a great voice: * Fear God and give Him glory, alleluia.

V: Adore the One who has made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water.

R: Fear God and give Him glory, alleluia.

Second Reading. *Disc. 108*

Be a sacrifice and priest of God.

A reading from the "Discourses" of St. Peter Chrysologus, bishop.

‘I appeal to you by the mercy of God’. Paul makes a request, or rather God makes it through Paul, because he wants to be loved rather than feared. God makes a request, because he does not want to be so much the Lord as a father. God makes a request in his mercy, rather than punish in his severity.

Listen to what the Lord asks: ‘You see in me your body, your limbs, your organs, your bones, your blood. If you are afraid of what belongs to God, why do you not love what is your own? If you run away from your Lord, why do you not run back to your kinsman?’

‘Perhaps you are ashamed because of the greatness of the passion which you inflicted on me. Do not be afraid. This cross is not mine; it is the sting of death. These nails do not pierce me with pain; they pierce me more deeply with love of you. These wounds do not draw groans from me; rather they draw you into my heart. The stretching out of my body makes room for you in my heart; it does not increase my pain. My blood is not lost to me; it is paid in advance for your ransom.

‘Come then, come back to me, and come to know me as a father; for see, I return good for evil, love for injuries, and for deep wounds a deeper

love’.

But let us listen now to the appeal Saint Paul makes to us: ‘I appeal to you to present your bodies as a living sacrifice’. By this request the apostle has raised all mankind to the level of priests: ‘to present your bodies as a living sacrifice’.

How unique is the duty of the Christian priesthood! For there a man is himself sacrifice as well as priest; there a man does not look for something outside himself to offer to God; there a man brings with himself and in himself and for himself a sacrifice to God; there the victim is not consumed and the priest never completes his task; there the victim is slain but lives, the sacrificing priest cannot complete the stroke.

A wonderful sacrifice! A body is offered without a body, blood without blood. ‘I appeal to you by the mercy of God to present your bodies as a living sacrifice’.

My brothers, this sacrifice follows the pattern of Christ, who by his life sacrificed his body for the life of the world; he truly made his body a living sacrifice because, though slain, he lives. So through this victim death is rendered powerless, the sacrifice endures; the victim lives, death is punished. So it is that martyrs are born in death, make a beginning in their end, live as they die. They were thought to be extinguished on earth; yet they shine in heaven.

‘I appeal to you, brethren, by the mercy of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, that is holy’. These words echo the song of the prophet: ‘Sacrifice and offering you did not want, but you prepared a body for me’.

Since you are a human being, be God’s sacrifice and his priest. Do not throw away the privilege granted to you by divine authority. Put on the vestment of holiness; buckle on the belt of chastity. Let Christ be the veil for your head; let his cross be always on your forehead to protect it. Place on your breast the sacrament of divine knowledge. Keep ever burning the sweet-smelling incense of prayer. Take in your hand the sword of the Spirit. Set up the altar of your heart. And so without fear bring your body to God as his victim.

God seeks your faith, not your death. He thirsts for your prayer, not your blood. He is appeased by your love, not your death.

Responsorial. *Ap. 5: 9. 10*

R: Lord, you are worthy to take the scroll and to break open its seals, for you were slain, * and by your blood you purchased us for God, alleluia.

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

R: and by your blood you purchased us for God, alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Act. 13: 14b-43*

The discourse of Paul in the synagogue of Antioch of Pisidia.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

And on the sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down.

[Acts 13:15] After the reading of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent to them, saying, "Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it."

[Acts 13:16] So Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said: "Men of Israel, and you that fear God, listen.

[Acts 13:17] The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it.

[Acts 13:18] And for about forty years he bore with them in the wilderness.

[Acts 13:19] And when he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance, for about four hundred and fifty years.

[Acts 13:20] And after that he gave them judges until Samuel the prophet.

[Acts 13:21] Then they asked for a king; and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years.

[Acts 13:22] And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king; of whom he testified and said, 'I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.'

[Acts 13:23] Of this man's posterity God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised.

[Acts 13:24] Before his coming John had preached a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

[Acts 13:25] And as John was finishing his course, he said, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but after me one is coming, the sandals

of whose feet I am not worthy to untie.'

[Acts 13:26] "Brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you that fear God, to us has been sent the message of this salvation.

[Acts 13:27] For those who live in Jerusalem and their rulers, because they did not recognize him nor understand the utterances of the prophets which are read every sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning him.

[Acts 13:28] Though they could charge him with nothing deserving death, yet they asked Pilate to have him killed.

[Acts 13:29] And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a tomb.

[Acts 13:30] But God raised him from the dead;

[Acts 13:31] and for many days he appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are now his witnesses to the people.

[Acts 13:32] And we bring you the good news that what God promised to the fathers,

[Acts 13:33] this he has fulfilled to us their children by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, 'Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee.'

[Acts 13:34] And as for the fact that he raised him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he spoke in this way, 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.'

[Acts 13:35] Therefore he says also in another psalm, 'Thou wilt not let thy Holy One see corruption.'

[Acts 13:36] For David, after he had served the counsel of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid with his fathers, and saw corruption;

[Acts 13:37] but he whom God raised up saw no corruption.

[Acts 13:38] Let it be known to you therefore, brethren, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you,

[Acts 13:39] and by him every one that believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.

[Acts 13:40] Beware, therefore, lest there come upon you what is said in the prophets:

[Acts 13:41] 'Behold, you scoffers, and wonder, and perish; for I do a deed in your days, a deed you will never believe, if one declares it to you.'"

[Acts 13:42] As they went out, the people begged that these things might be told them the next sabbath.

[Acts 13:43] And when the meeting of the synagogue broke up, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to continue in the grace of God.

Responsorial. Act. 13: 27, 28-30; Is. 53: 8

R: The leaders of Jerusalem did not recognise Jesus and condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets; though not finding any reason to condemn him to death, they asked Pilate to kill him, * but God raised him from the dead on the third day. Alleluia.

V: With an oppressive and unjust sentence he was taken away from our midst

R: but God raised him from the dead on the third day. Alleluia.

Second Reading. C. 2, 14

We announce that which had been promised to our fathers.

A reading from the “Commentary on the Second Letter to the Corinthians” of St. Cyril of Alexandria, bishop.

As the triumph of Christ is affirmed on the cross when he suffered death for us, consumed by suffering, so also the apostles claim their triumph because of Christ, they make him known everywhere, they become always greater in the midst of tribulations, and they overcome the world, exactly because they are ready to bear everything, with all their heart, for the name of Christ.

In fact, they are truly rendered participants of his passion and are associated with the glory that will be revealed in the future. They say that they receive from God, the triumph, not because they expose themselves to pain or because they are oppressed with calamity, but because they run into tribulations because of Jesus, whom they preach in the entire world, according to his will.

What then is the perfume of the knowledge of God the Father, diffused in the whole world by the holy apostles, as they themselves say, and the same Paul teaches elsewhere: “We in fact do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; as for us, we are your servants for the love of Jesus” (2 Cor. 4: 5); and elsewhere: “I consider myself as not knowing anything

else in the midst of you if not Jesus Christ, and Christ crucified” (1 Cor. 2: 2).

But in what way is he who was born of a woman, who has suffered on the cross, who has been subjected to death, even if he has then risen, the perfume of the knowledge of God the Father, if, as some think, Christ has to be considered a simple man like us?

Simple man, they say, even though inspired by God, but in reality not God by nature, even admitting that the Word of God had assumed humanity for the redemption.

If he does not surpass the limits of our condition, he cannot bring the good perfume of the nature of God the Father; nor can one who has suffered death become the perfume of immortality. To which condition can Christ be the perfume of the knowledge of the Father, if not in so much as it is known absolutely that he is God, even though he appeared for us in the flesh? Otherwise how would the preachers have been able to announce him to the world as God by nature and in truth?

Or how would they have been able to know Jesus? In what way the holy doctors would have been able to say that God the Father had reconciled the world to himself in Christ, if he had not taken on himself the humanity in order to unite it with the Word born from God, as the wise work of the incarnation required?

The disciples of God, under the inspiration of the Spirit, did not preach Christ as the Word of God that dwelt in a man, but as the Word made flesh, that is united to the flesh endowed with a rational soul. And thus the Lord of glory is exactly he who was crucified.

Thus, considered in the flesh or without, separately or as the Word of God who lived amongst us, he is the perfume of the knowledge of God, because he effuses on us the good that is his by his nature, as perfume of the Father from whom he proceeds.

Responsorial. 2 Cor. 32: 4, 6, 5

R: This is the faith that we have through Christ, in front of God, * who has made us suitable ministers of a New Covenant, not of letters, but of the Spirit, alleluia.

V: It is not however by ourselves that we are capable of thinking of something as coming from ourselves, but our capacity comes from God,

R: who has made us suitable ministers of a New Covenant, not of letters, but of the Spirit, alleluia.

Gospel. *Jn. 10: 22-30*

The Father and I are one.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 10:22] It was the feast of the Dedication at Jerusalem;

[John 10:23] it was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of Solomon.

[John 10:24] So the Jews gathered round him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ, tell us plainly."

[John 10:25] Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness to me;

[John 10:26] but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep.

[John 10:27] My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me;

[John 10:28] and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.

[John 10:29] My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.

[John 10:30] I and the Father are one."

WEDNESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. Ap. 14: 14-15: 4

The hour for harvesting has arrived.

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

[Rev 14:14] Then I looked, and lo, a white cloud, and seated on the cloud one like a son of man, with a golden crown on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand.

[Rev 14:15] And another angel came out of the temple, calling with a loud voice to him who sat upon the cloud, "Put in your sickle, and reap, for the hour to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is fully ripe."

[Rev 14:16] So he who sat upon the cloud swung his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped.

[Rev 14:17] And another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he too had a sharp sickle.

[Rev 14:18] Then another angel came out from the altar, the angel who has power over fire, and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, "Put in your sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for its grapes are ripe."

[Rev 14:19] So the angel swung his sickle on the earth and gathered the vintage of the earth, and threw it into the great wine press of the wrath of God;

[Rev 14:20] and the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood flowed from the wine press, as high as a horse's bridle, for one thousand six hundred stadia.

CHAPTE

R 15

[Rev 15:1] Then I saw another portent in heaven, great and wonderful, seven angels with seven plagues, which are the last, for with them the wrath of God is ended.

[Rev 15:2] And I saw what appeared to be a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those who had conquered the beast and its image and the number of its

name, standing beside the sea of glass with harps of God in their hands.
[Rev 15:3] And they sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and wonderful are thy deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are thy ways, O King of the ages!
[Rev 15:4] Who shall not fear and glorify thy name, O Lord? For thou alone art holy. All nations shall come and worship thee, for thy judgments have been revealed."

Responsorial. *Ap. 15: 3; Ex. 15: 11*

R: They sang the song of the Lamb: Great and amazing are your deeds, Lord God the Almighty. * Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations, alleluia.

V: Who is like you among the Gods, Lord? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, worker of prodigies?

R: Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations, alleluia.

Second Reading. *Disc. 137, 1-3*

Christ is the light of the nations and the head of the Church.

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

Dearly beloved, your faith is not ignorance and we know that you have learnt it from Heaven, on the word of the master in whom you have placed your hope: our Lord Jesus Christ, who suffered for us and was resurrected, is the head of the Church and the Church is his body; and the health of his body is in the unity of the members and in the unity of charity.

Whoever becomes cold in charity, gets sick in the body of Christ. But he who has exalted our head is so powerful that he can cure also the sick members. As long as they because of the great evil do not get cut off, but adhere to the head until they are healed.

Whoever is still united to the body need not despair of salvation; if instead he is cut off, he cannot be either cured or made healthy. If therefore Christ is the head of the Church and the Church is his body, the total Christ is the head with his body. He is already risen, therefore we have our head in heaven. Our head intercedes for us. Our head, without sin and without death anymore, makes atonement to God for our sins, so that we also rising at the end of time, transformed into the heavenly glory, follow our head. Where the head is, the other members will also be.. But also while we are here

below we are his members: let us not despair, because we will follow our head.

Consider in fact, brothers, the love of our head. He is already in heaven, and yet he works on earth, as long as the Church toils on the earth: here Christ has hunger, has thirst, is naked, is a stranger, sick, in prison. He says that he suffers all that his body suffers on the earth. At the end of time he will separate his body on the right, and the others by whom he is now oppressed on the left; then he will say to those who are on his right: "Come, blessed of my Father, receive in inheritance the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Mt. 25: 34).

The Lord has also said that he is the shepherd, the door (cfr. Jn. 10: 11, 7). He is the door in as much as he is the head, he is the shepherd with regard to the body. He says in fact to Peter, on whom he uniquely founded the Church: "Peter, do you love me?" He answered: "I love you, Lord". "Feed my sheep". And for the third time: "Peter, do you love me?" (Jn. 21: 15-17). Peter was grieved that he had questioned him for the third time; as if he who had seen into his conscience when he had denied him, did not see now the faith that he was professing.

But after his resurrection the Lord had questioned him, not because he ignored with what intention he professed the love of Christ, but so that with the triple confession of love he could cancel the triple denial caused by fear.

Responsorial. *Col. 1: 17-19; Mic. 4: 7*

R: He is the first of all things and everything exists in him. * He is also the head of the body, which is the Church; the first born of those who rise from the dead, in order to obtain the pre-eminence over all things, alleluia.

V: The Lord will reign over them on his holy mountain, now and forever.

R: He is also the head of the body, that is the Church, the first born of those who rise from the dead, in order to obtain the pre-eminence over all things, alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Act. 13: 44- 14: 6*

Paul and Barnabas go towards the Gentiles.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

[Acts 13:44] The next sabbath almost the whole city gathered together to hear the word of God.

[Acts 13:45] But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with jealousy, and contradicted what was spoken by Paul, and reviled him.

[Acts 13:46] And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles.

[Acts 13:47] For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, `I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the uttermost parts of the earth.'"

[Acts 13:48] And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of God; and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.

[Acts 13:49] And the word of the Lord spread throughout all the region.

[Acts 13:50] But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men of the city, and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.

[Acts 13:51] But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and went to Ico'nium.

[Acts 13:52] And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTE

R 14

[Acts 14:1] Now at Ico'nium they entered together into the Jewish synagogue, and so spoke that a great company believed, both of Jews and of Greeks.

[Acts 14:2] But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren.

[Acts 14:3] So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who bore witness to the word of his grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

[Acts 14:4] But the people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles.

[Acts 14:5] When an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to molest them and to stone them,

[Acts 14:6] they learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycao'nia, and to the surrounding country;

Responsorial. *Act. 13: 46-48*

R: Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly: “We had to proclaim the word of God to you first, but since you have rejected it, since you do not think yourselves worthy of eternal life, we must turn to the pagans. * For this is what the Lord commanded us to do when he said: I have made you a light for the nations, so that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth”. Alleluia.

V: On hearing this, the pagans rejoiced and glorified the word of God.

R: For this is what the Lord commanded us to do when he said: I have made you a light for the nations, so that my salvation may reach the ends of the earth. Alleluia.

Second Reading. *Disc. 155, 5-6*

The Law of the Spirit that gives life in Christ Jesus.

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

The Hebrew people celebrated the Passover with the killing of the lamb and with the unleavened bread: this was a figure of the killing of Christ, and the unleavened bread signified the new life, without the old leaven, for which the Apostle says: “Remove the old leaven, in order to be a new dough, as you are unleavened bread. And in fact Christ, our Passover, has been immolated!” (1Cor. 5: 7).

The Hebrew people therefore celebrated the Passover not yet in the splendour of the light, but in the obscurity of the sign; and fifty days after this celebration, the Law written by the finger of God was given to them on the mountain.

The true Passover comes and Christ, who works the passage from death to life, is immolated.

In Hebrew in fact Passover signifies passage, as the evangelist demonstrates saying: “The hour had come, for Jesus, to pass from this world to the Father” (Jn. 13: 1). Therefore the Passover is celebrated: the Lord rose passing from death to life, that is he makes Passover; and after fifty days the Holy Spirit, the finger of God, comes.

But consider in what way it was celebrated before and how it is celebrated now. Before the people remained far away, there was fear, not love. They were so frightened that they said to Moses: “You speak to us, but do not let God speak to us, otherwise we will die” (Ex. 20: 19).

God, therefore, descended in the fire on Mount Sinai, as it is written, but inspiring terror in the people who remained far away, and writing with his finger on the stone, not in the heart.

Here instead, when the Holy Spirit came, the faithful were reunited together. He did not frighten them from the mountain, but he entered into the house. Suddenly they heard a sound from heaven like the rising of a violent wind; there was a sound, but no one was terrified. You have heard that there was sound, you see that there was also the fire: because on the mountain there was both one and the other, the fire and the sound: but there, there was also smoke, here instead a tranquil fire.

There appeared to them, says the Scriptures, distinct tongues of fire. They rested on each one of them and they began to speak the languages as the Spirit was given to them to express themselves.

Listen to one who speaks in tongues and recognize the Spirit who writes not on the stone but in the hearts. In fact “The Law of the Spirit that gives life” is written in the heart, not on the stone; “in Christ Jesus”, in whom the true Passover has been celebrated, “he has freed you from the law of sin and from death” (Rm. 8: 2).

Besides the Lord says through the prophet: “Behold the days will come, says the Lord, in which I will conclude a new covenant with the house of Israel. Not like the covenant that I made with their fathers, when I took them by the hand to make them come out from the land of Egypt”.

He clearly shows then the difference: “ I will place, he says, my law in their souls. I will write it on their hearts” (Jer. 31: 31-32, 33).

If therefore the law of God is written in your heart, the fire does not terrify you, but it entices you from inside the soul.

Then, “the law of the Spirit that gives life in Christ Jesus has freed you from the law of sin and death” (Rm. 8: 2).

Responsorial. 2 Cor. 3: 3; Rm. 8: 15

R: You are a letter of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. * Not on tablets of stone, but on the tablets of the flesh of your hearts.

V: You have not received a spirit of slaves to fall back into fear; but you have received a spirit of adopted sons.

R: Not on tablets of stone, but on the tablets of the flesh of your hearts.

Gospel. Jn. 12: 44-50

I like a light have come into the world.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 12:44] And Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me.

[John 12:45] And he who sees me sees him who sent me.

[John 12:46] I have come as light into the world, that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

[John 12:47] If any one hears my sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.

[John 12:48] He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has a judge; the word that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day.

[John 12:49] For I have not spoken on my own authority; the Father who sent me has himself given me commandment what to say and what to speak.

[John 12:50] And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has bidden me."

THURSDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Ap. 15: 5- 16: 21*

The seven cups of the anger of God.

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

[Rev 15:5] After this I looked, and the temple of the tent of witness in heaven was opened,

[Rev 15:6] and out of the temple came the seven angels with the seven plagues, robed in pure bright linen, and their breasts girded with golden girdles.

[Rev 15:7] And one of the four living creatures gave the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God who lives for ever and ever;

[Rev 15:8] and the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven angels were ended.

CHAPTE

R 16

[Rev 16:1] Then I heard a loud voice from the temple telling the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

[Rev 16:2] So the first angel went and poured his bowl on the earth, and foul and evil sores came upon the men who bore the mark of the beast and worshiped its image.

[Rev 16:3] The second angel poured his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a dead man, and every living thing died that was in the sea.

[Rev 16:4] The third angel poured his bowl into the rivers and the fountains of water, and they became blood.

[Rev 16:5] And I heard the angel of water say, "Just art thou in these thy judgments, thou who art and wast, O Holy One.

[Rev 16:6] For men have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink. It is their due!"

[Rev 16:7] And I heard the altar cry, "Yea, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are thy judgments!"

[Rev 16:8] The fourth angel poured his bowl on the sun, and it was allowed to scorch men with fire;

[Rev 16:9] men were scorched by the fierce heat, and they cursed the name of God who had power over these plagues, and they did not repent and give him glory.

[Rev 16:10] The fifth angel poured his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was in darkness; men gnawed their tongues in anguish

[Rev 16:11] and cursed the God of heaven for their pain and sores, and did not repent of their deeds.

[Rev 16:12] The sixth angel poured his bowl on the great river Euphra'tes, and its water was dried up, to prepare the way for the kings from the east.

[Rev 16:13] And I saw, issuing from the mouth of the dragon and from the mouth of the beast and from the mouth of the false prophet, three foul spirits like frogs;

[Rev 16:14] for they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty.

[Rev 16:15] ("Lo, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is he who is awake, keeping his garments that he may not go naked and be seen exposed!")

[Rev 16:16] And they assembled them at the place which is called in Hebrew Armaged'don.

[Rev 16:17] The seventh angel poured his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, "It is done!"

[Rev 16:18] And there were flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, and a great earthquake such as had never been since men were on the earth, so great was that earthquake.

[Rev 16:19] The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell, and God remembered great Babylon, to make her drain the cup of the fury of his wrath.

[Rev 16:20] And every island fled away, and no mountains were to be found;

[Rev 16:21] and great hailstones, heavy as a hundred-weight, dropped on men from heaven, till men cursed God for the plague of the hail, so fearful was that plague.

Responsorial. *Mt. 24: 42, 46; Ap. 16: 15; 1 Tm. 5: 3*

R: If the owner of the house knew at what hour the thief would come, he would keep vigil. Behold I come like a thief, says the Lord. * Blessed is he who is vigilant, alleluia.

V: When it is said: Peace and security, then suddenly ruin will strike them.

R: Blessed is he who is vigilant, alleluia.

Second Reading. *Book 1, 108-111*

In Christ our life is not dead, but our fault.

A reading from the treatise “On the Holy Spirit” of St. Ambrose, bishop.

O the divine mystery of that cross, on which weakness hangs, might is free, vices are nailed, and triumphal trophies raised. So that a certain saint said: “Pierce my flesh with the nails of the fear of You;” he says not with nails of iron, but of fear and faith. For the bonds of virtue are stronger than those of punishment. Lastly, his faith bound Peter, when he had followed the Lord as far as the hall of the high priest, whom no one had bound, and punishment loosened not him, whom faith bound. Again, when he was bound by the Jews, prayer loosed him, punishment did not hold him, because he had not gone back from Christ.

Therefore do you also crucify sin, that you may die to sin; he who dies to sin lives to God; do you live to Him Who spared not His own Son, that in His body He might crucify our passions. For Christ died for us, that we might live in His revived Body. Therefore not our life but our guilt died in Him, “Who,” it is said, “bore our sins in His own Body on the tree; that being set free from our sins we might live in righteousness, by the wound of Whose stripes we are healed.”

That wood of the cross is, then, as it were a kind of ship of our salvation, our passage, not a punishment, for there is no other salvation but the passage of eternal salvation. Whilst expecting death I do not feel it; whilst thinking little of punishment I do not suffer; whilst careless of fear I know it not.

Who, then, is He by the wound of whose stripes we are healed but Christ the Lord? Of Whom the same Isaiah prophesied His stripes were our healing, of Whom Paul the Apostle wrote in his epistle: “Who knew no sin, but was made sin for us.” This indeed, was divine in Him, that His Flesh did no sin, nor did the creature of the body assumed by Him sin.

Responsorial. *1 Pt. 2: 24; Is. 53: 5*

R: The Christ bore our sins in his body on the cross; * so that not living anymore for sin, we could live for justice, alleluia.

V: The punishment that gives us salvation has fallen on him; by his wounds we have been healed.

R: so that not living anymore for sin, we could live for justice, alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Act. 14: 8 – 15: 4*

Paul at Lystra.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

[Acts 14:8] Now at Lystra there was a man sitting, who could not use his feet; he was a cripple from birth, who had never walked.

[Acts 14:9] He listened to Paul speaking; and Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well,

[Acts 14:10] said in a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he sprang up and walked.

[Acts 14:11] And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycao'nian, "The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!"

[Acts 14:12] Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, because he was the chief speaker, they called Hermes.

[Acts 14:13] And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates and wanted to offer sacrifice with the people.

[Acts 14:14] But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out among the multitude, crying,

[Acts 14:15] "Men, why are you doing this? We also are men, of like nature with you, and bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.

[Acts 14:16] In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways;

[Acts 14:17] yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good and gave you from heaven rains and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."

[Acts 14:18] With these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them.

[Acts 14:19] But Jews came there from Antioch and Ico'nium; and having persuaded the people, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.

[Acts 14:20] But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city; and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe.

[Acts 14:21] When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Ico'nium and to Antioch,

[Acts 14:22] strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

[Acts 14:23] And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they believed.

[Acts 14:24] Then they passed through Pisid'ia, and came to Pamphyl'ia.

[Acts 14:25] And when they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attali'a;

[Acts 14:26] and from there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had fulfilled.

[Acts 14:27] And when they arrived, they gathered the church together and declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.

[Acts 14:28] And they remained no little time with the disciples.

CHAPTE

R 15

[Acts 15:1] But some men came down from Judea and were teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

[Acts 15:2] And when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and the elders about this question.

[Acts 15:3] So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, reporting the conversion of the Gentiles, and they gave great joy to all the brethren.

[Acts 15:4] When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they declared all that God had done with them.

Responsorial. *Act. 14: 15; Is. 45: 18*

R: We preach to you the conversion from this vanity * to the living God who has made heaven and earth. Alleluia.

V: Thus says the Lord who created the heavens, the God who formed and made the earth: “I am the Lord there is no other, return to me”.

R: To the living God who has made heaven and earth. Alleluia.

Second Reading. *Disc. 130, 2*

The Lord has created and redeemed his servants.

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

He is the bread that has come down from heaven, bread that restores and is never lacking, bread that can be received without being consumed. This bread was signified also by the manna, as it is written: “I will give them bread from heaven, man will eat the bread of angels” (Ps. 77: 24-25). Who is the bread from heaven if not Christ? But so that man could eat the bread of angels, the Lord of the angels became man. If he had not become man, we would not have had his flesh, we would not eat the bread from the altar. Let us hurry to receive the inheritance, because great is the pledge that we have.

My brothers, let us desire the life of Christ, because we have with us the pledge of his death. How will he not give his goods, he who suffered our evils? In this earth, in this wicked world what abounded if not the birth, toil and death? Scrutinize the human reality and convince me that I lie. Consider, all you men, if there is something else in this world other than being born, toiling and dying. These are the acquisitions of our reason, and they are overabundant.

To such a commerce the divine Merchant has descended! And since every merchant gives and receives, he gives that which he has and receives that which he does not have, when he buys something he gives money and

receives that which he has bought; Christ also has given and received in this market. But what has he received? That which abounds here: being born, toiling and dying. And what has he given? Rebirth, resurrection, reigning in eternity.

O good merchant, buy us! But why do I say buy us, if instead we have to thank you because you have bought us? You pay us our ransom: we drink your blood, you distribute to us our price.

We read also the gospel which is our nourishment. We are your servants, we are your creature; you have created us and redeemed us. Everyone can acquire a servant, but cannot create him.

The Lord instead has created and redeemed his servants. He has created them so that they may exist; he has redeemed them, so that they may not be prisoners forever. We had run into the prince of this world, who seduced Adam making him a servant, and he began to possess us like slaves in his own house. But our Redeemer came and the deceiver was overcome. And what did our Redeemer do to our seducer? In order to pay our price he laid the trap of the cross and he placed his blood as the bait. That one could shed his blood, but he did not deserve to drink it.

And by the fact itself that he shed the blood of one who was not a debtor, he was obliged to hand back the debtors; shedding the blood of the innocent, he had to go far away from the guilty. The Lord has poured out his blood in order to eliminate our sins; therefore the blood of the Redeemer has destroyed him who held us slaves. Let us love him therefore, because he is sweet: "Taste and see how good is the Lord!" (Ps. 33: 9).

Responsorial. *Cfr. Jer. 31: 11, 12*

R: The Lord has redeemed and freed his people; they will come and they will sing hymns on the heights of Sion, they will flow towards the goods of the Lord, towards the grain, the new wine and the oil, * and they will not languish anymore, alleluia.

V: Grain, wine and oil will abound,

R: and they will not languish anymore, alleluia.

Gospel. *Jn. 13: 16-20*

He who welcomes the one whom I will send, welcomes me.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 13:16] Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him.

[John 13:17] If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.

[John 13:18] I am not speaking of you all; I know whom I have chosen; it is that the scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.'

[John 13:19] I tell you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he.

[John 13:20] Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives any one whom I send receives me; and he who receives me receives him who sent me."

FRIDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Ap. 17: 1-18*

Babylon the great is condemned.

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

[Rev 17:1] Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who is seated upon many waters,

[Rev 17:2] with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and with the wine of whose fornication the dwellers on earth have become drunk."

[Rev 17:3] And he carried me away in the Spirit into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of blasphemous names, and it had seven heads and ten horns.

[Rev 17:4] The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and bedecked with gold and jewels and pearls, holding in her hand a golden cup full of abominations and the impurities of her fornication;

[Rev 17:5] and on her forehead was written a name of mystery: "Babylon the great, mother of harlots and of earth's abominations."

[Rev 17:6] And I saw the woman, drunk with the blood of the saints and the blood of the martyrs of Jesus. When I saw her I marveled greatly.

[Rev 17:7] But the angel said to me, "Why marvel? I will tell you the mystery of the woman, and of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that carries her.

[Rev 17:8] The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is to ascend from the bottomless pit and go to perdition; and the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will marvel to behold the beast, because it was and is not and is to come.

[Rev 17:9] This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated;

[Rev 17:10] they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he comes he must remain only a little while.

[Rev 17:11] As for the beast that was and is not, it is an eighth but it belongs to the seven, and it goes to perdition.

[Rev 17:12] And the ten horns that you saw are ten kings who have not yet received royal power, but they are to receive authority as kings for one hour, together with the beast.

[Rev 17:13] These are of one mind and give over their power and authority to the beast;

[Rev 17:14] they will make war on the Lamb, and the Lamb will conquer them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those with him are called and chosen and faithful."

[Rev 17:15] And he said to me, "The waters that you saw, where the harlot is seated, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.

[Rev 17:16] And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the harlot; they will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire,

[Rev 17:17] for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and giving over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

[Rev 17:18] And the woman that you saw is the great city which has dominion over the kings of the earth."

Responsorial. *Ap. 17: 14; 6: 2*

R: The powerful of the earth will fight against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them: * he is the Lord of lords and the King of kings, alleluia.

V: He was given a crown, and he came out victorious to win again:

R: he is the Lord of lords and the King of kings, alleluia.

Second Reading. *Disc. 21, 6-9*

He was persecuted without reason he who fought without fault.

A reading from the "Commentary on Psalm 118" of St. Ambrose, bishop.

"The powerful persecute me without reason, but my heart fears your words" (Ps. 118: 161). There are also the powerful of the world, the dominators of darkness, who try to oppress your soul and work in your heart violent attacks promising you the kingdoms of the earth, honours and

riches, if your fragile mind succumbs and you decide to obey their commands. These powers sometimes persecute without reason, sometimes with reason. They persecute without reason those in whom they find nothing for themselves, trying to subject them; with reason, those who hand themselves over into their power and who let themselves be entirely possessed by the world: rightly they claim in fact for themselves the dominion of those who belong to them and claim from them the merchandise of iniquity.

For a good reason those who bear unjustly the torments of persecution are said to be martyrs, because they have not robbed, nor have they done violence to anyone, nor have they shed blood, nor have they committed any crime against the laws, yet they have to bear the greater torments of the thieves. He says the truth and is not listened to; he speaks only of healthy things and is contested, so much that he can say: "When I speak of peace, they want war" (Ps. 119: 7). Without reason therefore he who is tortured without fault suffers persecution; he is attacked like one who is guilty while he has to be praised exactly for such a witness; he is tortured like an evil-doer because he glories in the name of the Lord, while the piety is the foundation of all virtues. Truly he is contested without reason he who by impious and unfaithful men is accused of wickedness, while he is the master of faith. Without doubt, he who is attacked without reason has to be strong and constant. How is it then that he has added: "my heart fears your words"? To be anxious is a sign of weakness, of fear, dread. But there is also a weakness that leads to salvation and a fear of the saints: "You his saints, fear the Lord" (Ps. 33: 10) and "Blessed is the man who fears the Lord". For what reason? Because "he will find great joy in his commandments" (Ps. 111: 1). Consider a martyr in the midst of dangers: from there the beasts howl in order to strike terror, on the other side the flaming blades clash and the flame of a blazing furnace rises; there the sound of heavy chains is heard, here there is a cruel executioner. Look, I say, attentively how all around is full of torments, and then observe this martyr: he thinks of the divine commandments, of the eternal fire, of the torments without end that the perfidious suffer, of the always renewed anguish of the bitter punishment. He fears in his heart, not wanting to cause for himself the eternal ruin by believing in the present. He is disturbed in his soul while he catches a glimpse in some way of the terrible lance of the future judgement.

Does it not seem to you that this trepidation could accompany a constant man to the faith? The confidence of him who desires the eternal things and the trepidation for the divine judgements contributes to the same end. It pleases God that I merit being so! Thus if the persecutor strikes me, I do not consider the bitterness of my torments, I do not measure the torments, nor the punishments, I do not think of the atrocity of any pain, but consider all this as something light. I will be anxious instead in the fear that Christ will disown me, that Christ will exclude me, that he will expel me from the college of priests, that he will judge me unworthy. I see myself above all, although terrified of the corporal punishment, all the more anxious for the future judgement. And even if he tells me: "Man of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Mt. 14: 31), he will offer me his right hand, and he will make my soul which is disturbed by the events of this world, firm and unshakeable.

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

R: We are exposed to death because of Jesus, * so that also the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh, alleluia.

V: For you, Lord, every day we are put to death, we are considered as sheep for the slaughter.

R: So that also the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh, alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Act. 15: 5-35*

Contrasts and council of Jerusalem.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

[Acts 15:5] But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up, and said, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses."

[Acts 15:6] The apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter.

[Acts 15:7] And after there had been much debate, Peter rose and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.

[Acts 15:8] And God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us;

[Acts 15:9] and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith.

[Acts 15:10] Now therefore why do you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?

[Acts 15:11] But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

[Acts 15:12] And all the assembly kept silence; and they listened to Barnabas and Paul as they related what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

[Acts 15:13] After they finished speaking, James replied, "Brethren, listen to me.

[Acts 15:14] Simeon has related how God first visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

[Acts 15:15] And with this the words of the prophets agree, as it is written,

[Acts 15:16] `After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up,

[Acts 15:17] that the rest of men may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by my name,

[Acts 15:18] says the Lord, who has made these things known from of old.'

[Acts 15:19] Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God,

[Acts 15:20] but should write to them to abstain from the pollutions of idols and from unchastity and from what is strangled and from blood.

[Acts 15:21] For from early generations Moses has had in every city those who preach him, for he is read every sabbath in the synagogues."

[Acts 15:22] Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsab'bas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren,

[Acts 15:23] with the following letter: "The brethren, both the apostles and the elders, to the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cili'cia, greeting.

[Acts 15:24] Since we have heard that some persons from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions,

[Acts 15:25] it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

[Acts 15:26] men who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

[Acts 15:27] We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth.

[Acts 15:28] For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:

[Acts 15:29] that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from unchastity. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell."

[Acts 15:30] So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter.

[Acts 15:31] And when they read it, they rejoiced at the exhortation.

[Acts 15:32] And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, exhorted the brethren with many words and strengthened them.

[Acts 15:33] And after they had spent some time, they were sent off in peace by the brethren to those who had sent them.

[Acts 15:35] But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

Responsorial. *Act. 15: 8, 9; 11: 18*

R: God, who knows the hearts, has granted the Holy Spirit to them also as he did to us. * He has not made any discrimination between them and us, purifying their hearts through faith. Alleluia.

V: Therefore to the pagans also God has granted the possibility to convert so that they can have eternal life.

R: He has not made any discrimination between them and us, purifying their hearts through faith. Alleluia.

Second Reading. *C. 36, 1-2. 37-38*

Many are the paths, one the way.

A reading from the “Letter to the Corinthians” of St. Clement I, pope and martyr.

This is the way, beloved, in which we find our Saviour, Jesus Christ, the High Priest of all our offerings, the defender and helper of our infirmity. By Him we look up to the heights of heaven. By Him we behold, as in a glass, His immaculate and most excellent visage. By Him are the eyes of our hearts opened. By Him our foolish and darkened understanding blossoms up anew towards His marvellous light. By Him the Lord has willed that we should taste of immortal knowledge, “who, being the brightness of His majesty, is by so much greater than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.”

Let us then, men and brethren, with all energy act the part of soldiers, in accordance with His holy commandments. Let us consider those who serve under our generals, with what order, obedience, and submissiveness they perform the things that are commanded them. All are not prefects, nor commanders of a thousand, nor of a hundred, nor of fifty, nor the like, but each one in his own rank performs the things commanded by the king and the generals. The great cannot subsist without the small, or the small without the great. There is a kind of mixture in all things, and thence arises mutual advantage.

Let us take our body for an example. The head is nothing without the feet, and the feet are nothing without the head; yes, the very smallest members of our body are necessary and useful to the whole body. But all work harmoniously together, and are under one common rule for the preservation of the whole body.

Let our whole body, then, be preserved in Christ Jesus; and let every one be subject to his neighbour, according to the special gift bestowed upon him.

Let the strong not despise the weak, and let the weak show respect unto the strong. Let the rich man provide for the wants of the poor; and let the poor man bless God, because He has given him one by whom his need may be supplied. Let the wise man display his wisdom, not by [mere] words, but through good deeds. Let the humble not bear testimony to himself, but leave witness to be borne to him by another. Let him that is pure in the flesh not

grow proud of it, and boast, knowing that it was another who bestowed on him the gift of continence.

Let us consider, then, brethren, of what matter we were made, — who and what manner of beings we came into the world, as it were out of a sepulchre, and from utter darkness. He who made us and fashioned us, having prepared His bountiful gifts for us before we were born, introduced us into His world.

Since, therefore, we receive all these things from Him, we ought for everything to give Him thanks; to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Responsorial. *Col. 1: 18; 2: 12b, 9-10a, 12a*

R: Christ is the head of the body, that is of the Church; the beginning, the first born of those who rise from the dead. * In him you have been resurrected by faith in the power of God, alleluia.

V: In Christ dwells the fullness of God, corporally, and you have a part in his fullness, and you have been buried together with him in baptism.

R: In him you have been resurrected by faith in the power of God, alleluia.

Gospel. *Jn. 14: 1-6*

I am the way, the truth and the life.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 14:1] "Let not your hearts be troubled; believe in God, believe also in me.

[John 14:2] In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?

[John 14:3] And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.

[John 14:4] And you know the way where I am going."

[John 14:5] Thomas said to him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going; how can we know the way?"

[John 14:6] Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me.

SATURDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Ap. 18: 1-20*

The fall of Babylon.

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

[Rev 18:1] After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority; and the earth was made bright with his splendor.

[Rev 18:2] And he called out with a mighty voice, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! It has become a dwelling place of demons, a haunt of every foul spirit, a haunt of every foul and hateful bird;

[Rev 18:3] for all nations have drunk the wine of her impure passion, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth have grown rich with the wealth of her wantonness."

[Rev 18:4] Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues;

[Rev 18:5] for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities.

[Rev 18:6] Render to her as she herself has rendered, and repay her double for her deeds; mix a double draught for her in the cup she mixed.

[Rev 18:7] As she glorified herself and played the wanton, so give her a like measure of torment and mourning. Since in her heart she says, 'A queen I sit, I am no widow, mourning I shall never see,'

[Rev 18:8] so shall her plagues come in a single day, pestilence and mourning and famine, and she shall be burned with fire; for mighty is the Lord God who judges her."

[Rev 18:9] And the kings of the earth, who committed fornication and were wanton with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning;

[Rev 18:10] they will stand far off, in fear of her torment, and say, "Alas! alas! thou great city, thou mighty city, Babylon! In one hour has thy judgment come."

[Rev 18:11] And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn for her, since no one buys their cargo any more,

[Rev 18:12] cargo of gold, silver, jewels and pearls, fine linen, purple, silk and scarlet, all kinds of scented wood, all articles of ivory, all articles of costly wood, bronze, iron and marble,

[Rev 18:13] cinnamon, spice, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour and wheat, cattle and sheep, horses and chariots, and slaves, that is, human souls.

[Rev 18:14] "The fruit for which thy soul longed has gone from thee, and all thy dainties and thy splendor are lost to thee, never to be found again!"

[Rev 18:15] The merchants of these wares, who gained wealth from her, will stand far off, in fear of her torment, weeping and mourning aloud,

[Rev 18:16] "Alas, alas, for the great city that was clothed in fine linen, in purple and scarlet, bedecked with gold, with jewels, and with pearls!

[Rev 18:17] In one hour all this wealth has been laid waste." And all shipmasters and seafaring men, sailors and all whose trade is on the sea, stood far off

[Rev 18:18] and cried out as they saw the smoke of her burning, "What city was like the great city?"

[Rev 18:19] And they threw dust on their heads, as they wept and mourned, crying out, "Alas, alas, for the great city where all who had ships at sea grew rich by her wealth! In one hour she has been laid waste.

[Rev 18:20] Rejoice over her, O heaven, O saints and apostles and prophets, for God has given judgment for you against her!"

Responsorial. *Is. 52: 11, 12; Ap. 18: 4; Jer. 51: 45*

R: Come out of Babylon, purify yourselves, you who bear the ornaments of the Lord, because the Lord walks in front of you: * He gathers his people, alleluia.

V: Come out from her, my people; let everyone save his life from the burning anger of the Lord:

R: He gathers his people, alleluia.

Second Reading. Disc. 53, 1-2. 4

Christ is the light.

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

Through Christ's resurrection, the underworld is opened; through the neophytes of the Church the earth is renewed; heaven is unlocked through

the Holy Spirit. For the underworld is opened and gives back the dead; earth is renewed and from it springs the crop of those who are risen; heaven is unlocked and receives them as they ascend.

So the good thief ascends to paradise; the bodies of the saints enter the holy city; the dead return to the living; and sharing, as it were, in Christ's resurrection, all the elements tend upwards.

The underworld gives back those that it holds to the upper world; earth sends its dead to heaven; heaven presents those that it receives to the Lord. By a single process the Saviour's passion raises from the depths, lifts up from earth and places on high.

For Christ's resurrection is life for the dead, pardon for sinners, glory for the saints. And so the holy prophet invites every creature to the celebration of Christ's resurrection; we should rejoice, he says, and be glad on this day that the Lord has made.

The light of Christ is day without night, day without end. Understanding that day to be Christ, Saint Paul says: 'The night is far gone, the day is at hand'. 'The night is far gone', he says, it is not approaching; for he wishes you to understand that when Christ's light draws near, the darkness of the devil is put to flight, and the shadows of sin do not approach; the old gloom is dispelled by the endless brightness, and the insidious approach of wrongdoing is halted.

Christ is the Son-day, to whom the Father-day has whispered the secret of his divinity. He is the day who says through the mouth of Solomon: 'I have made an undying light rise in the heavens'.

Just as there is no night at all to follow the heavenly day, so too the darkness of sin does not follow the justice of Christ. For the brightness and the luminous splendour of the heavenly day last forever, and there are no shadows which can put an end to it; and so too the brilliance and the flashing radiance of Christ's light never cease, and there is no darkness of sin which can overcome them. This is why Saint John the Evangelist says: 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it'.

And so, my brethren, we ought all to rejoice on this holy day. No one should separate himself from the general rejoicing because he has sins on his conscience; no one should refuse to take part in the public worship because of the burden of his misdeeds. However great a sinner he may be, on this day he should not despair of pardon, for the privileges granted by

this day are great. If a thief was thought worthy of paradise, why should not a Christian be thought worthy of forgiveness?

Responsorial.

R: The Lord in all his beauty is exalted above the stars: * he rides in his splendour on the clouds of heaven, where his name will abide forever, alleluia.

V: From the heights of heaven he comes forth, and to the heights of heaven he returns:

R: he rides in his splendour on the clouds of heaven, where his name will abide forever, alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Act. 15: 36 – 16: 15*

Beginning of the second journey of Paul.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

[Acts 15:36] And after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Come, let us return and visit the brethren in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are."

[Acts 15:37] And Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark.

[Acts 15:38] But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Pamphyl'ia, and had not gone with them to the work.

[Acts 15:39] And there arose a sharp contention, so that they separated from each other; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus,

[Acts 15:40] but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.

[Acts 15:41] And he went through Syria and Cili'cia, strengthening the churches.

R 16

[Acts 16:1] And he came also to Derbe and to Lystra. A disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer; but his father was a Greek.

[Acts 16:2] He was well spoken of by the brethren at Lystra and Ico'nium.

[Acts 16:3] Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews that were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

[Acts 16:4] As they went on their way through the cities, they delivered to them for observance the decisions which had been reached by the apostles and elders who were at Jerusalem.

[Acts 16:5] So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and they increased in numbers daily.

[Acts 16:6] And they went through the region of Phry'gia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia.

[Acts 16:7] And when they had come opposite My'sia, they attempted to go into Bithyn'ia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them;

[Acts 16:8] so, passing by My'sia, they went down to Tro'as.

[Acts 16:9] And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedo'nia was standing beseeching him and saying, "Come over to Macedo'nia and help us."

[Acts 16:10] And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedo'nia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

[Acts 16:11] Setting sail therefore from Tro'as, we made a direct voyage to Sam'othrace, and the following day to Ne-ap'olis,

[Acts 16:12] and from there to Philip'pi, which is the leading city of the district of Macedo'nia, and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days;

[Acts 16:13] and on the sabbath day we went outside the gate to the riverside, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had come together.

[Acts 16:14] One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyati'ra, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul.

[Acts 16:15] And when she was baptized, with her household, she besought us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

Responsorial. *Is. 52: 10; Mk. 16: 15*

R: Yahweh bares his holy arm in the sight of all the nations: * All the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God. Alleluia.

V: Go out into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature.

R: All the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God. Alleluia.

Second Reading. *Book 4, 2*

Christ has given his body for the life of all.

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

‘I am dying’, said the Lord, ‘for all men, so that through me all may have life; by my flesh I have redeemed the flesh of all men. For in my death, death will die, and fallen human nature will rise again with me.

‘In this way I have become, like you, a man descended from Abraham, so that I may be made like my brethren in every respect’. Saint Paul understood this well when he said: ‘Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared in them, that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil’.

There was never any other way to destroy the one who had the power of death, and therefore death itself. Christ had to give himself up for us; the one had to be the ransom for all, for he was the head of all.

Accordingly he said in another place, namely in the Psalms, when he offered himself to God the Father as a spotless sacrifice on our behalf: ‘You wanted no sacrifice or oblation, but you prepared a body for me. You took no pleasure in holocausts or sacrifices for sin. Then I said, ‘Here I am’”.

He was crucified on behalf of us all and for the sake of us all, so that, when one had died instead of all, we all might live in him. For it was impossible that he should be defeated by death or that one who is life by his very nature should yield to corruption. Indeed, Christ’s own words prove to us that he offered his flesh for the life of the world: ‘ Holy Father, keep them’. And again: ‘For their sake I make myself holy’.

He said, 'I make myself holy', meaning 'I consecrate and offer myself as a spotless sacrifice with a sweet savour'. For what was offered on the altar was made holy or called holy according to the law. Therefore Christ gave his body for the life of all, and through his body planted life among us again. How this came about I shall explain as best I can.

When God's life-giving Word came to dwell in human flesh, he remade it for its good, that is, for its life. Being linked with flesh in this unique form of union, he made it a source of life, just as he is by his own nature a source of life.

Thus the body of Christ gives life to those who share with him. By being among those who are liable to death his body drives death out; by bringing forth in itself a principle capable of utterly destroying corruption, his body expels corruption.

Responsorial. *Jn. 10: 14, 15, 10*

R: I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep, * and I lay down my life for them, alleluia.

V: I have come that men may have life, and may have it in all its fullness,

R: and I lay down my life for them, alleluia.

Gospel. *Jn. 14: 7- 14*

He who has seen me has seen the Father.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 14:7] If you had known me, you would have known my Father also; henceforth you know him and have seen him."

[John 14:8] Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied."

[John 14:9] Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

[John 14:10] Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works.

[John 14:11] Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves.

[John 14:12] "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I go to the Father.

[John 14:13] Whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son;

[John 14:14] if you ask anything in my name, I will do it.