

HOLY WEEK

PALM SUNDAY AND OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Is. 50: 4 – 51: 3*

The Servant of the Lord, who bears the trials.

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

The Lord GOD has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him that is weary. Morning by morning he wakens, he wakens my ear to hear as those who are taught. The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I turned not backward. I gave my back to those who smote me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I hid not my face from shame and spitting. For the Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been confounded; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together.

Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. Behold, the Lord GOD helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up.

Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the voice of his servant, who walks in darkness and has no light, yet trusts in the name of the LORD and relies upon his God? Behold, all you who kindle a fire, who set brands alight! Walk by the light of your fire, and by the brands which you have kindled! This shall you have from my hand: you shall lie down in torment.

"Hearken to me, you who pursue deliverance, you who seek the LORD; look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug out. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for when he was but one I called him, and I blessed him and made him many. For the LORD will comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places, and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving and the voice of song.

Responsorial *cfr. Jer. 11: 19; Ps. 40: 8 – 9*

R: I was like a meek lamb that is brought to the slaughter, and I did not know that they were plotting against me saying: * Let us cut down the tree in its bloom, let us tear him up from the land of the living.

V: All my enemies were plotting against me, they slandered me and said:

R: Let us cut down the tree in its bloom, let us tear him up from the land of the living.

Second Reading. *Book 4 or. 4*

*The passion of Christ and his precious cross are a security
and an unassailable wall for those who believe in him.*

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

Christ, though being of divine nature and by right equal to God the Father, did not consider this equality as something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, making himself obedient unto death, and to a death on the cross (cfr. Ph. 2: 6-8). Truly his salutary passion knocked down the principalities and triumphed over the dominators of the world and of this century, he freed everyone from the tyranny of the devil and brought us back to God. By his wounds we have been healed, and he has borne our sins on the cross in his body; thus, while he dies, we are conserved in life, his passion has become our security and wall of defence. He, who has ransomed us from the condemnation of the law, helps us when we are tempted. He suffered outside the city in order to sanctify the people with his blood.

Therefore, I repeat, the passion of Christ, his precious cross and his pierced hands become a security, an inaccessible and unshakeable wall for those who believe in him. Therefore it is rightly said: Behold, with my hands I have designed your walls (cfr. Is. 49: 16). That is, by means of the piercing of the hands; and with only this particular he wants to signify his entire passion. I have designed, that is formed. And you are always before me.

If in fact he suffered for us, how could he forget us? How could those, for whom he was nailed to the cross, not be always in front of his eyes? He

himself says: “My sheep listen to my voice and they follow me. And I give them eternal life” (Jn. 10: 27-28). And again: “No one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand” (Jn. 10: 29); this is precisely because they are in the shadow of the Most High, protected by divine help as in a fortified tower.

From the moment therefore that God the Father sustains us almost with his hands, keeping us near him, and does not permit that we are led to evil or that we succumb to the malice of the wicked, nor that we become the prey of the diabolic violence: nothing impedes us from understanding that the wall of Zion designed by his hands signifies the experts in the spiritual arts that, pervaded by grace, make themselves know through the testimony of virtue.

We can say therefore that the walls of Zion placed by God are his holy apostles and evangelists, approved by his own words, which never fail or make a mistake. Their names are written in heaven and placed in the book of the living. Do not marvel if he says that the saints are the bulwark and the walls of the Church. He himself is the wall and the bulwarks, like a fortress.

In the same way that he is the true light, and yet he says that they are the light of the world (Mt. 5: 14): thus, he being the wall and security of those who believe in him, he gives this stupendous dignity to his saints, of being called the walls of his Church.

Responsorial

R: O cross, marvellous sign, to which the Lord, Son of our God, was nailed by the weight of sins. * In you he defeats death.

V: Sweet wood, sweet nails, from which the sweet weight hangs.

R: In you he defeats death.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Jer. 22: 1-9; 23: 1-8*

Invectives against the wicked kings. The promise of a just king, the son of David.

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.

Thus says the LORD: "Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word, and say, 'Hear the word of the LORD, O King of Judah, who sit on the throne of David, you, and your servants, and your people who enter these gates. Thus says the LORD: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place.

For if you will indeed obey this word, then there shall enter the gates of this house kings who sit on the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their servants, and their people.

But if you will not heed these words, I swear by myself, says the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation.

For thus says the LORD concerning the house of the king of Judah: "'You are as Gilead to me, as the summit of Lebanon, yet surely I will make you a desert, an uninhabited city.

I will prepare destroyers against you, each with his weapons; and they shall cut down your choicest cedars, and cast them into the fire.

"And many nations will pass by this city, and every man will say to his neighbor, "Why has the LORD dealt thus with this great city?"

And they will answer, "Because they forsook the covenant of the LORD their God, and worshiped other gods and served them."""

"Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!" says the LORD.

Therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who care for my people: "You have scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the LORD.

Then I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply.

I will set shepherds over them who will care for them, and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall any be missing, says the LORD.

"Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.

In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'

"Therefore, behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when men shall no longer say, 'As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt' but, 'As the LORD lives who brought up and led the descendants of the house of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them'. Then they shall dwell in their own land."

Responsorial *Jer. 23: 1, 2, 3*

R: Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the flock of my pasture, says the Lord, * So I will attend to you for your evil doings, I myself will gather the remnant of my flock.

V: You have scattered my sheep, you have driven them away and you have not attended to them.

R: So I will attend to you for your evil doings, I myself will gather the remnant of my flock.

Second Reading. *Disc. 15:37-40*

Let us carry the cross of the Lord, who, crucifying our flesh, destroys sin.

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

He who loves the law of the Lord nails his own flesh, knowing that when his old man will be crucified with Christ, the lust of the flesh will be subdued. Plant therefore the nail and destroy the stirring of sin. There is in reality a spiritual nail that nails these members to the cross. Yes, the fear of the Lord and his judgements nail this flesh, and reduces it to servitude. Since, if it repulses the nails of the fear of the Lord, without doubt it is said: "My spirit will not remain forever in man, because he is flesh" (Gen. 6: 3). If therefore the carnal members are not affixed to the cross, nailed with the nails of the fear of the Lord, the Spirit of God will not remain in them.

He who dies with Christ is nailed with nails, so that he who carries in his body the death of the Lord may rise with him. He deserves to hear himself addressed with the words of Jesus: "Put me as a seal on your heart, as a seal on your arm; because love is strong as death, jealousy is as tenacious as Sheol" (Sg. of Sgs. 8: 6). Imprint therefore on your chest and in your heart this sign of the Crucified, drive it into your arm, so that your works may be dead to sin.

Let not the hardness of the nails offend you, because it is the hardness of love, nor let their strong rigour dismay you, because “love is as strong as death”

Love, in fact, puts to death every sin and fault; love kills like a mortal blow: when we love the commandments of the Lord, we die to the shameful actions and to sin.

The love of God, is the Word of God, “efficacious and sharper than any double edged sword; it penetrates up to the point of division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints and the marrow” (Heb. 4: 12) with these nails of love our soul and our flesh must be pierced, so that they also may say: “I am sick with love” (Sg. of Sgs. 5: 8).

Love therefore has its nail, its sword with which to wound the soul. Happy is he who deserves to be wounded by this sword!

Let us offer ourselves to these wounds, by which whoever has died cannot die anymore. Such in fact is the death of those who follow the Lord, of whom it is said “There are some among those present here who will not die, until they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom” (Mt. 16: 28). Justly Peter did not fear death, he who said that he was ready to die for Christ, rather than abandon him or betray him.

Let us therefore carry the cross of the Lord, who, crucifying our flesh, destroys sin. It is the holy fear that crucifies the flesh: “He who does not take up his cross and follow me, is not worthy of me” (Mt. 10: 38). He who fears Christ and crucifies the sin of the flesh is worthy. To this fear love follows, which, buried with Christ, is not separated from him; in Christ he dies, with him he is buried, with Christ he rises.

Responsorial. *Ph. 1: 21; Gal. 6: 14*

R: For me to live is Christ, and to die a gain. * As for me may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

V: Through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

R: As for me may I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

YEAR A

Gospel. *Mt. 21: 1-11*

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

[Mat 21:1] And when they drew near to Jerusalem and came to Beth'phage, to the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples,

[Mat 21:2] saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find an ass tied, and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to me.

[Mat 21:3] If any one says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and he will send them immediately."

[Mat 21:4] This took place to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet, saying,

[Mat 21:5] "Tell the daughter of Zion, Behold, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of an ass."

[Mat 21:6] The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them;

[Mat 21:7] they brought the ass and the colt, and put their garments on them, and he sat thereon.

[Mat 21:8] Most of the crowd spread their garments on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

[Mat 21:9] And the crowds that went before him and that followed him shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!"

[Mat 21:10] And when he entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, "Who is this?"

[Mat 21:11] And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee."

Third Reading. Disc. 9 on the Palms.

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, the king of Israel.

A reading from the "Discourses" of St. Andrew of Crete, bishop.

Come, come, let us go up together to the Mount of Olives. Together let us meet Christ, who is returning today from Bethany and going of his own accord to that holy and blessed passion to complete the mystery of our salvation.

And so he comes, willingly taking the road to Jerusalem, he who came down from the heights for us, to raise us who lie in the depths to exaltation with him, as the revealing word says, 'above all authority and rule and power and above every name that is named'.

He comes without display, without boast. ‘He will not contend’, he says, ‘or shout out, and no one will hear his voice’. He is gentle and lowly, and his entrance is humble.

Come then, let us run with him as he presses on to his passion. Let us imitate those who have gone out to meet him, not scattering olive branches or garments or palms in his path, but spreading ourselves before him as best we can, with humility of soul and upright purpose. So may we welcome the Word as he comes, so may God who cannot be contained within any bounds, be contained within us.

For he is pleased to have shown us this gentleness, he who is gentle and who ‘rides upon the setting sun’, which refers to our extreme lowliness. He is pleased to come and live with us and to raise us up or bring us back to him through his kinship with us.

As the first fruits of the whole batch of man he is said to ‘ride upon the heaven of heavens to the rising of the sun’, which I interpret as his own glory and divinity. But because of his love for man he will not cease until he has raised man’s nature from the ground, from one degree of glory to another, and has manifested it with himself on high.

So it is ourselves that we must spread under Christ’s feet, not coats or lifeless branches or shoots of trees, matter which wastes away and delights the eye only for a few brief hours. But we have clothed ourselves with Christ’s grace, or with the whole Christ – ‘for as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ’ – so let us spread ourselves like coats under his feet.

As those who were formerly scarlet from sin but became white as wool through the purification of saving baptism, let us offer not palm branches but the prizes of victory to the conqueror of death.

Today let us too give voice with the children to that sacred chant, as we wave the spiritual branches of our soul: ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel’.

Responsorial. *Jn. 12: 12, 13; Mt. 21: 8, 9*

R: When the people heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, they went out to meet him. Great crowds of people spread their cloaks on the road while others spread branches in his path, and they shouted, * Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord!

V: The crowds who went in front of him and those who followed all shouted aloud, * Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord!

YEAR B

Gospel. *Mk 11: 1-10*

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Mark.

[Mark 11:1] And when they drew near to Jerusalem, to Beth'phage and Bethany, at the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples,

[Mark 11:2] and said to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately as you enter it you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat; untie it and bring it.

[Mark 11:3] If any one says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' say, 'The Lord has need of it and will send it back here immediately.'"

[Mark 11:4] And they went away, and found a colt tied at the door out in the open street; and they untied it.

[Mark 11:5] And those who stood there said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?"

[Mark 11:6] And they told them what Jesus had said; and they let them go.

[Mark 11:7] And they brought the colt to Jesus, and threw their garments on it; and he sat upon it.

[Mark 11:8] And many spread their garments on the road, and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields.

[Mark 11:9] And those who went before and those who followed cried out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!

[Mark 11:10] Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is coming! Hosanna in the highest!"

Third Reading. *Book 4, esp. 2*

Behold the just king.

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

“Behold, a king will reign according to justice and the princes will rule according to right” (Is. 32: 1). The Only Begotten Word of God was the universal King together with God the Father and, coming he subjected every visible and invisible creature. And although the earthly man going away and freeing himself from his kingdom, had held in little account his commands so as to let himself be tricked by the dominating hand of the devil with his bonds of sin, he, administrator and dispenser of all justice, subjected him again to his yoke. In fact all his ways are upright.

Let us say that the ways of Christ are the evangelical sayings, through which we tend towards every virtue and, adorning our head with the emblems of piety, let us gain the prize of the wonderful vocation. Truly upright are these ways, there is nothing false or perverse in them: they are straight and linear. It is written in fact: The path of the just is straight, and his way is level (cfr. Is. 26: 7). In reality, the way of the law is hard, because it passes through many symbols and figures, and is of an intolerable difficulty. On the contrary, the way of the evangelical precepts is easy and does not present anything that is rough or awkward. Upright therefore are the ways of Christ, that edify the holy city, the Church, in which he himself dwells; he in fact lives in the saints, and we have become the temple of the living God, possessing in ourselves Christ, through the Holy Spirit. The Lord has founded the Church, and he himself is the foundation on which we also, like precious stones, are built into the holy temple, the dwelling of God, through the Holy Spirit (cfr. Ep. 2: 20-22).

Steady therefore is the Church, and immoveable is its base, that has Christ as its foundation. In fact Scripture says: “Behold, I place in Zion a cornerstone, chosen, precious and he who believes in it will not remain confused” (1 Pt. 2: 6). He, having founded the Church, frees his people from slavery: he frees and preserves us, who were oppressed on the earth by the tyranny of Satan, from sin, and subjects us to his yoke; and this without price or gifts. In fact his disciple says: “Not at the price of corruptible things, like silver and gold, were you freed from your empty way of life that you had inherited from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (1 Pt. 1: 18-19). He therefore poured out for us his blood: we do not belong anymore to ourselves, but to him who bought us and has ransomed us. Therefore very rightly, those who transgress the right norm of the true faith, are accused by the voice of the saints as deniers of God who has redeemed us.

Responsorial. *Ps. 117: 26, 27, 22, 23*

R: Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, * God, the Lord, is our light.

V: The stone rejected by the builders has become the corner stone; behold the work of the Lord: a marvel to our eyes.

R: God the Lord, is our light.

Or.

Third Reading. *Tratt. 51: 2-4*

He who on earth was called the king of the Jews, in the heavens is the Lord of the angels.

A reading from the “Treatise on John” of St. Augustine, bishop

For the Gospel, the reading of which you have just been listening to, says: “On the next day many people that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet Him, and cried, Hosanna: blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord as the King of Israel.”

The branches of palm trees are laudatory emblems, significant of victory, because the Lord was about to overcome death by dying, and by the trophy of His cross to triumph over the devil, the prince of death. But when it is said, “Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel,” by “in the name of the Lord” we are rather to understand “in the name of God the Father,” although it might also be understood as in His own name, inasmuch as He is also Himself the Lord. But His own words are a better guide to our understanding, when He says, “I am come in my Father’s name, and you receive me not: another will come in his own name, and him you will receive.”

For the true teacher of humility is Christ, who humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. But He does not lose His divinity in teaching us humility; in the one He is the Father’s equal, in the other He is assimilated to us. By that which made Him the equal of the Father, He called us into existence; and by that in which He is like unto us, He redeemed us from ruin.

These, then, were the words of praise addressed to Jesus by the multitude, “Hosanna: blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel.” What a cross of mental suffering must the Jewish rulers have endured when they heard so great a multitude proclaiming Christ as their King! But what honour was it to the Lord to be King of Israel? What great thing was it to the King of eternity to become the King of men? For Christ’s kingship over Israel was not for the purpose of exacting tribute, of putting swords into His soldiers’ hands, of subduing His enemies by open warfare; but He was King of Israel in exercising kingly authority over their inward natures, in consulting for their eternal interests, in bringing into His heavenly kingdom those whose faith, and hope, and love were centred in Himself. Accordingly, for the Son of God, the Father’s equal, the Word by whom all things were made, in His good pleasure to be King of Israel, was an act of condescension and not of promotion; a token of compassion, and not any increase of power. For He who was called on earth the King of the Jews, is in the heavens the Lord of angels.

“Jesus”, therefore, “having found a donkey, sat on top of it, as it is written: Do not fear, daughter of Zion! Behold, your king comes, seated on top of a colt of a donkey” (Jn. 12: 14-15). This daughter of Zion, to whom these divinely inspired words are addressed, was among those sheep who listened to the voice of the shepherd; she was that multitude that accompanied him, acclaiming with so much devotion, the Lord who was coming. To her the prophet said: “Do not fear”; recognize him whom you praise and do not be terrified when you see him suffer, because that blood will be poured out in virtue of which all your sins will be cancelled.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Mt. 21: 8 – 9; Ps. 8: 3*

R: While the Lord entered into the holy city, the multitude of Jews, pre-announcing the resurrection of the Lord of life, * waved palm branches and acclaimed: Hosanna in the highest of heavens.

V: From the mouth of children and infants you have received praise.

R: They waved palm branches and acclaimed: Hosanna in the highest of heavens.

YEAR C

Gospel. *Lk. 19: 28-40*

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.

A reading from the Gospel of St, Luke.

[Luke 19:28] And when he had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem.

[Luke 19:29] When he drew near to Beth'phage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples,

[Luke 19:30] saying, "Go into the village opposite, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat; untie it and bring it here.

[Luke 19:31] If any one asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say this, 'The Lord has need of it.'"

[Luke 19:32] So those who were sent went away and found it as he had told them.

[Luke 19:33] And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?"

[Luke 19:34] And they said, "The Lord has need of it."

[Luke 19:35] And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their garments on the colt they set Jesus upon it.

[Luke 19:36] And as he rode along, they spread their garments on the road.

[Luke 19:37] As he was now drawing near, at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen,

[Luke 19:38] saying, "Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"

[Luke 19:39] And some of the Pharisees in the multitude said to him, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples."

[Luke 19:40] He answered, "I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out."

Third Reading. *Tratt. 37: 9-10*

If that blood had not been poured out, the world would not have been redeemed.

A reading from the "Treatise on John" of St. Augustine, bishop.

“His hour was not yet come;” not the hour in which He should be forced to die, but that in which He would deign to be put to death. For He Himself knew when He should die: He considered all things that were foretold of Him, and awaited all to be finished that was foretold to be before His suffering; that when all should be fulfilled, then should come His suffering in set order, not by fatal necessity.

In short, hear that you may prove. Among the rest that was prophesied of Him, it is also written: “They gave me gall for meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink.” How this happened, we know from the Gospel. First, they gave Him gall; He received it, tasted it, and spat it out. Thereafter, as He hung on the cross, that all that was foretold might be fulfilled, He said, “I thirst.” They took a sponge filled with vinegar, bound it to a reed, and put it to His mouth; He received it, and said, “It is finished.” What did that mean? All things that were prophesied before my death are completed, then what do I here any longer? In a word, when He said “It is finished, He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.”

Did the thieves, who were nailed beside Him, expire when they would? They were held by the bonds of flesh, for they were not the creators of the flesh; fixed by nails, they were a long time tormented, because they had not lordship over their weakness. The Lord, however, when He would, took flesh in a virgin’s womb: came forth to men when He would; lived among men so long as He would; and when He would He quitted the flesh. This is the part of power, not of necessity. This hour, then, He awaited; not the fated, but the fitting and voluntary hour; that all might first be fulfilled which had to be fulfilled before His decease. How could he have been under necessity of fate, when He said in another place, “I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again: no man takes it from me, but I lay it down of myself and take it again?” He showed this power when the Jews sought Him. “Whom do you seek?” said He. “Jesus,” said they. And He answered, “I am He.” When they heard this voice, “they went back and fell to the ground.”

Says one, If he had this power, why, when the Jews insulted him on the cross and said, “If he be the Son of God let him come down from the cross,” did he not come down, to show them his power by coming down? Because He was teaching us patience, therefore He deferred the demonstration of His power. For if He came down, moved as it were at their words, He would

be thought to have been overcome by the sting of their insults. He did not come down; there He remained fixed, to depart when He would. For what great matter was it for Him to descend from the cross, when He could rise again from the sepulchre? Let us, then, to whom this is ministered, understand that the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, then concealed, will be made manifest in the judgment, of which it is said, “God will be manifested; our God, and He will not be silent.” Why is it said, “will be manifested”? Because He, our God, — namely, Christ, — came hidden, will come manifest. “And will not be silent:” why this “will not be silent”? Because at first He did keep silence. When? When He was judged; that this, too, might be fulfilled which the prophet had foretold: “As a sheep He was led to the slaughter, and as a lamb before his shearer is dumb, so He opened not His mouth.” He would not have suffered did He not will to suffer: if he had not suffered, that blood would not have been shed; if that blood had not been shed, the world would not have been redeemed. Therefore let us give thanks to the power of His divinity, and to the compassion of His infirmity.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Mt. 21: 5, 7, 4*

R: Say to the daughter of Zion: * Behold, your king comes to you meek, seated on a donkey, with the colt the young of a beast of burden.

V: They led the donkey and the colt, and made Jesus sit on it. Now this happened so that what had been announced by the prophet could be fulfilled:

R: Behold, your king comes to you meek, seated on a donkey, with the colt the young of a beast of burden.

MONDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Is. 52:13 – 53: 12*

The servant of the Lord ill-treated for our sins.

A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

Behold, my servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. As many were astonished at him – his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the sons of men – so shall he startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they shall see, and that which they have not heard they shall understand.

Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed.

All of us like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. Yet it was the will of the LORD to bruise him; he has put him to grief; when he makes himself an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall

prosper in his hand; he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Responsorial *Cfr. Is. 53: 7, 12*

R: Ill-treated, he let himself be humiliated and did not open his mouth: he was like a lamb led to the slaughter; he was led to death, * in order to enliven his people.

V: He handed himself over to death and was numbered among the wicked.

R: in order to enliven his people.

Second Reading. *Hom. 10:1-3*

The death of Jesus was like an ear of wheat.

A reading from the “Homilies on the prophet Jeremiah” of Origen, presbyter.

Let us see what the Saviour says by the mouth of the prophet: “I was like a meek lamb that is brought to the slaughter, I did not know that they were plotting against me, saying: Let us put wood in his bread, let us tear him up from the land of the living; let his name not be remembered anymore” (Jer. 11: 19 Vulg.). Isaiah also says that Christ “like a lamb was led to the slaughter and, like a dumb sheep in front of its shearers, he did not open his mouth” (Is. 53: 7). If in this passage it is prophesied of Christ, there it is Christ himself who speaks of himself: I, he says, like a meek lamb was led to the slaughter, and I did not know (cfr. Jer. 11: 19). I did not know evil, I did not know the goods (earthly), I did not know sin, or injustice; it is simply the truth: I did not know! He has left to you to search for what he had not known. Read the Apostle: “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us” (2 Cor. 5: 21).

They plotted against me, saying: “Let us put wood in his bread” (cfr. Jer 11:19 Vulg.). The bread of Jesus, of which we are nourished, is his word. Since when he taught some wanted to put obstacles to his doctrine,

crucifying him they said: “Come, let us put wood in his bread”. To the word and to the teaching of Jesus they made the crucifixion of the Master follow: behold the wood put in his bread.

They certainly say with deceit: “Come, let us put wood in his bread” but I will say something marvellous here: the wood that was put in his bread made the bread better.

You have an example of this in the Law of Moses: how the wood put into the bitter water made it sweet, so also the wood of the passion of Christ, put into his doctrine, made his bread sweeter. In fact, before they put the wood into his bread, when it was only bread and not wood, his voice had not resounded through all the earth; when instead it had received the strength from the wood, the account of his passion was spread in the entire universe. The water of the Old Testament had become sweet through contact with the wood on the strength of the cross that it was prefiguring.

“Let us tear him up from the land of the living, and let his name not be remembered any more” (Jer 11:19). In this way they killed him, almost in order to uproot his name totally. But Jesus knows why and how to die. For this he says: If the grain of wheat does not fall to the ground and dies, it does not bear fruit (cfr. Jn 12:24).

Therefore, the death of Jesus Christ, like an ear of wheat, produced seven times and much more than that which had been sown. Let us think for a moment if he had not been crucified and after his death had not descended into Sheol: the grain of wheat would have remained alone and from it others would not have been born. Pay careful attention to the divine words, what do they want to make us understand: If the grain of wheat falling to the earth does not die, it does not bear fruit. The death of Jesus bore all those people as fruit. If therefore the death has given such an abundant harvest, what abundance will the resurrection bring about?

Responsorial. *Heb. 5: 7, 9; Ex. 17: 11*

R: In the days of his earthly life, *Christ offered prayers and supplications with strong cries and tears, and his prayer was answered because of his piety; he therefore became the cause of eternal salvation for all those who obey him.

V: When Moses raised his hands, Israel was stronger.

R: Christ offered prayers and supplications with strong cries and tears, and his prayer was answered because of his piety; he therefore became the cause of eternal salvation for all those who obey him.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Jer. 26: 1-15*

Jeremiah in danger of death because of the oracle of the ruin of the temple.

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.

[Jer 26:1] In the beginning of the reign of Jehoi'akim the son of Josi'ah, king of Judah, this word came from the LORD,

[Jer 26:2] "Thus says the LORD: Stand in the court of the LORD's house, and speak to all the cities of Judah which come to worship in the house of the LORD all the words that I command you to speak to them; do not hold back a word.

[Jer 26:3] It may be they will listen, and every one turn from his evil way, that I may repent of the evil which I intend to do to them because of their evil doings.

[Jer 26:4] You shall say to them, `Thus says the LORD: If you will not listen to me, to walk in my law which I have set before you,

[Jer 26:5] and to heed the words of my servants the prophets whom I send to you urgently, though you have not heeded,

[Jer 26:6] then I will make this house like Shiloh, and I will make this city a curse for all the nations of the earth."

[Jer 26:7] The priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD.

[Jer 26:8] And when Jeremiah had finished speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak to all the people, then the priests and the prophets and all the people laid hold of him, saying, "You shall die!

[Jer 26:9] Why have you prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, `This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate, without inhabitant'?" And all the people gathered about Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

[Jer 26:10] When the princes of Judah heard these things, they came up from the king's house to the house of the LORD and took their seat in the

entry of the New Gate of the house of the LORD.

[Jer 26:11] Then the priests and the prophets said to the princes and to all the people, "This man deserves the sentence of death, because he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears."

[Jer 26:12] Then Jeremiah spoke to all the princes and all the people, saying, "The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the words you have heard.

[Jer 26:13] Now therefore amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God, and the LORD will repent of the evil which he has pronounced against you.

[Jer 26:14] But as for me, behold, I am in your hands. Do with me as seems good and right to you.

[Jer 26:15] Only know for certain that if you put me to death, you will bring innocent blood upon yourselves and upon this city and its inhabitants, for in truth the LORD sent me to you to speak all these words in your ears."

Responsorial.

R: They have handed me into the hands of my enemies, they have thrown me amongst the wicked and they have not had pity for my life, the strong have gathered to fight me, * and like giants they have placed themselves against me.

V: Foreigners have risen against me and the strong have asked for my life,

R: and like giants they have placed themselves against me.

Second Reading. *Disc. 71 on the resurrection of the Lord, 1-2*

The death of Christ is the source of life.

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

We must all be partakers in Christ's Resurrection life. In my last sermon, dearly beloved, not inappropriately, as I think, we explained to you our participation in the cross of Christ, whereby the life of believers contains in itself the mystery of Passover, and thus what is honoured at the feast is celebrated by our practice.

And how useful this is you yourselves have proved, and by your devotion have learnt, how greatly benefited souls and bodies are by longer fasts, more frequent prayers, and more liberal alms. For there can be hardly

any one who has not profited by this exercise, and who has not stored up in the recesses of his conscience something over which he may rightly rejoice.

Since, therefore, by our forty days' observance we have wished to bring about this effect, that we should feel something of the Cross at the time of the Lord's Passion, we must strive to be found partakers also of Christ's Resurrection, and "pass from death unto life," while we are in this body.

For when a man is changed by some process from one thing into another, not to be what he was is to him an ending, and to be what he was not is a beginning. But the question is, to what a man either dies or lives: because there is a death, which is the cause of living, and there is a life, which is the cause of dying. And nowhere else but in this transitory world are both sought after, so that upon the character of our temporal actions depend the differences of the eternal retributions.

We must die, therefore, to the devil and live to God: we must perish to iniquity that we may rise to righteousness. Let the old sink, that the new may rise; and since, as says the Truth, "no one can serve two masters," let not him be Lord who has caused the overthrow of those that stood, but Him Who has raised the fallen to victory.

Accordingly, since the Apostle says, "the first man is of the earth earthly, the second man is from heaven heavenly. As is the earthly, such also are they that are earthly; and as is the heavenly, such also are they that are heavenly. As we have borne the image of the earthly, so let us also bear the image of Him Who is from heaven," we must greatly rejoice over this change, whereby we are translated from earthly degradation to heavenly dignity through His unspeakable mercy, Who descended into our estate that He might promote us to His, by assuming not only the substance but also the conditions of sinful nature, and by allowing the impossibility of Godhead to be affected by all the miseries which are the lot of mortal manhood.

Responsorial. *Gal. 2: 19, 20*

R: I am dead to the law, so that I can live for God; this life that I live in the flesh, I live in the faith of the Son of God, * who has loved me and has given himself for me.

V: I have been crucified with Christ; it is not anymore I who live, but Christ who lives in me,

R: who has loved me and has given himself for me.

Gospel. *Jn. 12: 1-11*

Let her do it, she is conserving it for the day of my burial.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Laz'arus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; Martha served, and Laz'arus was one of those at table with him. Mary took a pound of costly ointment of pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the ointment. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was to betray him), said, "Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" This he said, not that he cared for the poor but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box he used to take what was put into it. Jesus said, "Let her alone, let her keep it for the day of my burial. The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me."

When the great crowd of the Jews learned that he was there, they came, not only on account of Jesus but also to see Laz'arus, whom he had raised from the dead. So the chief priests planned to put Laz'arus also to death, because on account of him many of the Jews were going away and believing in Jesus.

TUESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Lam. 1: 1-12, 18-20*

The desolation of Jerusalem.

A reading from the book of Lamentations.

[Lam 1:1] How lonely sits the city that was full of people! How like a widow has she become, she that was great among the nations! She that was a princess among the cities has become a vassal.

[Lam 1:2] She weeps bitterly in the night, tears on her cheeks; among all her lovers she has none to comfort her; all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they have become her enemies.

[Lam 1:3] Judah has gone into exile because of affliction and hard servitude; she dwells now among the nations, but finds no resting place; her pursuers have all overtaken her in the midst of her distress.

[Lam 1:4] The roads to Zion mourn, for none come to the appointed feasts; all her gates are desolate, her priests groan; her maidens have been dragged away, and she herself suffers bitterly.

[Lam 1:5] Her foes have become the head, her enemies prosper, because the LORD has made her suffer for the multitude of her transgressions; her children have gone away, captives before the foe.

[Lam 1:6] From the daughter of Zion has departed all her majesty. Her princes have become like harts that find no pasture; they fled without strength before the pursuer.

[Lam 1:7] Jerusalem remembers in the days of her affliction and bitterness all the precious things that were hers from days of old. When her people fell into the hand of the foe, and there was none to help her, the foe gloated over her, mocking at her downfall.

[Lam 1:8] Jerusalem sinned grievously, therefore she became filthy; all who honored her despise her, for they have seen her nakedness; yea, she herself groans, and turns her face away.

[Lam 1:9] Her uncleanness was in her skirts; she took no thought of her doom; therefore her fall is terrible, she has no comforter. "O LORD, behold my affliction, for the enemy has triumphed!"

[Lam 1:10] The enemy has stretched out his hands over all her precious things; yea, she has seen the nations invade her sanctuary, those whom thou didst forbid to enter thy congregation.

[Lam 1:11] All her people groan as they search for bread; they trade their treasures for food to revive their strength. "Look, O LORD, and behold, for I am despised."

[Lam 1:12] "Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow which was brought upon me, which the LORD inflicted on the day of his fierce anger.

[Lam 1:18] "The LORD is in the right, for I have rebelled against his word; but hear, all you peoples, and behold my suffering; my maidens and my young men have gone into captivity.

[Lam 1:19] "I called to my lovers but they deceived me; my priests and elders perished in the city, while they sought food to revive their strength.

[Lam 1:20] "Behold, O LORD, for I am in distress, my soul is in tumult, my heart is wrung within me, because I have been very rebellious. In the street the sword bereaves; in the house it is like death.

Responsorial. Lam. 1: 12

R: All of you who pass by on the road, consider and observe * if there is any sorrow that is similar to my sorrow.

V: Observe, all people, and see

R: if there is any sorrow that is similar to my sorrow.

Second Reading. Ps. 131: 6-7

*Christ who is the life wanted to die
in order to make us worthy dwelling places of God.*

A reading from the "Treatise on the psalms" of St. Hillary, bishop.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, who being just brought to fulfilment all the mysteries of the human salvation and of the things which the prophets saw signified in David, one thing above all he wanted to do: that man, instructed in the divine science, would be made into a worthy dwelling of God. And that man had to become the dwelling of God, we apprehend from God himself, who by the mouth of the prophet says: "I will live in their midst and I will walk with them" (2 Cor. 6: 16; cfr. Lev. 26: 11 -12) "and I will be their God and they will be my people" (Ez.

37: 27); and again: They will exult without end and I will live in the midst of them (cfr. Ps. 5: 12 Vulg.).

The Lord himself then says in the gospel: “If anyone loves me, he will observe my word and my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him” (Jn. 14: 23). And the Apostle also says: “You are the temple of God and the Spirit of God lives in you” (1 Cor. 3: 16).

God comes to live in the minds of the believers not through a bodily passage, and neither by opening a passage through the thickness of nature, as if, exiting from a place, he should stop uniquely where he has entered; he penetrates instead into the hearts that are purified from earthly passions, in virtue of a spiritual power and he infuses himself like a light into the minds that are open to innocence, in order to illuminate them.

Therefore the Only Begotten Son of God, having been assumed with the body, swears that he will not enter under the roof of his house, that is he will not return to his heavenly dwelling, until the heart of man has not been made into a residence of the Lord. In the same way he vows that he will not lie down on his bed (cfr. Ps. 131: 3). The bed is the rest from the human toil. But, since in heaven he rests forever, and his divine nature cannot know exhaustion, he is always on the bed, which is in rest.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, remaining God, assumed the form of a slave and made himself “obedient unto death, and to death on a cross” (Ph. 2: 8): I do not know what he could have suffered more than death! But only for this he made himself obedient unto death: in order to give us the possibility to become the home of God. He who is the life, in fact, wanted to die and did not hesitate to assume – with untiring strength of love – the fragile home of the body, in order to make his, remaining in God, the form of a servant.

He rose therefore from the bed of his eternal beatitude when, in order to obey to the will of the Father, from God he made himself man, from powerful weak, dead. He who gives life, the eternal judge of all ages, judged guilty of the cross!

Responsorial. *Ph. 2: 6-7; Rm. 15: 1, 3*

R: Though being of divine nature, he did not consider his equality with God a thing to be grasped; * but undressed himself, assuming the condition of a servant and, becoming similar to men he appeared in human form.

V: We have the duty to bear the infirmity of the weak, without pleasing ourselves; Christ in fact did not try to please himself,

R: but undressed himself, assuming the condition of a servant and, becoming similar to men he appeared in human form.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Jer. 8: 13 – 9: 9*

Lament over the vineyard of the Lord.

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.

[Jer 8:13] When I would gather them, says the LORD, there are no grapes on the vine, nor figs on the fig tree; even the leaves are withered, and what I gave them has passed away from them."

[Jer 8:14] Why do we sit still? Gather together, let us go into the fortified cities and perish there; for the LORD our God has doomed us to perish, and has given us poisoned water to drink, because we have sinned against the LORD.

[Jer 8:15] We looked for peace, but no good came, for a time of healing, but behold, terror.

[Jer 8:16] "The snorting of their horses is heard from Dan; at the sound of the neighing of their stallions the whole land quakes. They come and devour the land and all that fills it, the city and those who dwell in it.

[Jer 8:17] For behold, I am sending among you serpents, adders which cannot be charmed, and they shall bite you," says the LORD.

[Jer 8:18] My grief is beyond healing, my heart is sick within me.

[Jer 8:19] Hark, the cry of the daughter of my people from the length and breadth of the land: "Is the LORD not in Zion? Is her King not in her?"

"Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images, and with their foreign idols?"

[Jer 8:20] "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

[Jer 8:21] For the wound of the daughter of my people is my heart wounded, I mourn, and dismay has taken hold on me.

[Jer 8:22] Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then has the health of the daughter of my people not been restored?

CHAPT

[Jer 9:1] O that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!

[Jer 9:2] O that I had in the desert a wayfarers' lodging place, that I might leave my people and go away from them! For they are all adulterers, a company of treacherous men.

[Jer 9:3] They bend their tongue like a bow; falsehood and not truth has grown strong in the land; for they proceed from evil to evil, and they do not know me, says the LORD.

[Jer 9:4] Let every one beware of his neighbor, and put no trust in any brother; for every brother is a supplanter, and every neighbor goes about as a slanderer.

[Jer 9:5] Every one deceives his neighbor, and no one speaks the truth; they have taught their tongue to speak lies; they commit iniquity and are too weary to repent.

[Jer 9:6] Heaping oppression upon oppression, and deceit upon deceit, they refuse to know me, says the LORD.

[Jer 9:7] Therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: "Behold, I will refine them and test them, for what else can I do, because of my people?"

[Jer 9:8] Their tongue is a deadly arrow; it speaks deceitfully; with his mouth each speaks peaceably to his neighbor, but in his heart he plans an ambush for him.

[Jer 9:9] Shall I not punish them for these things? says the LORD; and shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this?

Responsorial. *Cfr. Jer. 2: 2*

R: I had planted you as my choice vine; * how is it that you have become a degenerated branch, that you crucify me and free Barabbas?

V: I had planted you as a choice vine, a genuine grapevine;

R: how is it that you have become a degenerated branch, that you crucify me and free Barabbas?

Second Reading. *Nm. 6, 7*

*He persevered till the end bearing everything,
so that in Christ a full and perfect patience could be found in its
consummation.*

A reading from the treatise “The advantages of patience” of St. Cyprian, bishop.

Nor, beloved brethren, did Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, teach this in words only; but He fulfilled it also in deeds. And because He had said that He had come down for this purpose, that He might do the will of His Father; among the other marvels of His virtues, whereby He showed forth the marks of a divine majesty, He also maintained the patience of His Father in the constancy of His endurance. Finally, all His actions, even from His very advent, are characterized by patience as their associate; in that, first of all, coming down from that heavenly sublimity to earthly things, the Son of God did not scorn to put on the flesh of man, and although He Himself was not a sinner, to bear the sins of others. His immortality being in the meantime laid aside, He suffers Himself to become mortal, so that the guiltless may be put to death for the salvation of the guilty. The Lord is baptized by the servant; and He who is about to bestow remission of sins, does not Himself disdain to wash His body in the laver of regeneration.

For forty days He fasts, by whom others are feasted. He is hungry, and suffers famine, that they who had been in hunger of the word and of grace may be satisfied with heavenly bread. He wrestles with the devil tempting Him; and, content only to have overcome the enemy, He strives no farther than by words.

He ruled over His disciples not as servants in the power of a master; but, kind and gentle, He loved them with a brotherly love. He deigned even to wash the apostles’ feet, that since the Lord is such among His servants, He might teach, by His example, what a fellow servant ought to be among his peers and equals.

Nor is it to be wondered at, that among the obedient He showed Himself such, since He could bear Judas even to the last with a long patience — could take meat with His enemy — could know the household foe, and not openly point him out, nor refuse the kiss of the traitor.

And moreover, in His very passion and cross, before they had reached the cruelty of death and the effusion of blood, what infamies of reproach were patiently heard, what mocking of contempt were suffered, so that He received the spitting of insulters, who with His spittle had a little before made eyes for a blind man; and He in whose name the devil and his angels is now scourged by His servants, Himself suffered scourging! He was

crowned with thorns, who crowns martyrs with eternal flowers. He was smitten on the face with palms, who gives the true palms to those who overcome. He was despoiled of His earthly garment, who clothes others in the vesture of immortality. He was fed with gall, who gave heavenly food. He was given to drink of vinegar, who appointed the cup of salvation. That guiltless, that just One, — nay, He who is innocence itself and justice itself, — is counted among transgressors, and truth is oppressed with false witnesses. He who shall judge is judged; and the Word of God is led silently to the slaughter. And when at the cross of the Lord the stars are confounded, the elements are disturbed, the earth quakes, night shuts out the day, the sun, that he may not be compelled to look on the crime of the Jews, withdraws both his rays and his eyes, He speaks not, nor is moved, nor declares His majesty even in His very passion itself.

Even to the end, all things are born perseveringly and constantly, in order that in Christ a full and perfect patience may be consummated.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Is. 53: 7, 12*

R: Like a lamb he was led to the slaughter, and ill-treated he did not open his mouth; he handed himself over to death, * in order to give life to his people.

V: He abandoned his soul to death, and has been numbered among criminals,

R: in order to give life to his people.

Gospel. *Jn. 13: 21-33, 36-38*

*One of you will betray me,
the cock will not crow before you will have betrayed me three times.*

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 13:21] When Jesus had thus spoken, he was troubled in spirit, and testified, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me."

[John 13:22] The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke.

[John 13:23] One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was lying close to the breast of Jesus;

[John 13:24] so Simon Peter beckoned to him and said, "Tell us who it is of whom he speaks."

[John 13:25] So lying thus, close to the breast of Jesus, he said to him, "Lord, who is it?"

[John 13:26] Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give this morsel when I have dipped it." So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.

[John 13:27] Then after the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly."

[John 13:28] Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him.

[John 13:29] Some thought that, because Judas had the money box, Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the feast"; or, that he should give something to the poor.

[John 13:30] So, after receiving the morsel, he immediately went out; and it was night.

[John 13:31] When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of man glorified, and in him God is glorified;

[John 13:32] if God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once.

[John 13:33] Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.'

[John 13:36] Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now; but you shall follow afterward."

[John 13:37] Peter said to him, "Lord, why cannot I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."

[John 13:38] Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the cock will not crow, till you have denied me three times.

WEDNESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Lam. 2: 1-10*

The punishment inflicted by the Lord.

A reading from the book of Lamentations.

[Lam 2:1] How the Lord in his anger has set the daughter of Zion under a cloud! He has cast down from heaven to earth the splendor of Israel; he has not remembered his footstool in the day of his anger.

[Lam 2:2] The Lord has destroyed without mercy all the habitations of Jacob; in his wrath he has broken down the strongholds of the daughter of Judah; he has brought down to the ground in dishonor the kingdom and its rulers.

[Lam 2:3] He has cut down in fierce anger all the might of Israel; he has withdrawn from them his right hand in the face of the enemy; he has burned like a flaming fire in Jacob, consuming all around.

[Lam 2:4] He has bent his bow like an enemy, with his right hand set like a foe; and he has slain all the pride of our eyes in the tent of the daughter of Zion; he has poured out his fury like fire.

[Lam 2:5] The Lord has become like an enemy, he has destroyed Israel; he has destroyed all its palaces, laid in ruins its strongholds; and he has multiplied in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation.

[Lam 2:6] He has broken down his booth like that of a garden, laid in ruins the place of his appointed feasts; the LORD has brought to an end in Zion appointed feast and sabbath, and in his fierce indignation has spurned king and priest.

[Lam 2:7] The Lord has scorned his altar, disowned his sanctuary; he has delivered into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces; a clamor was raised in the house of the LORD as on the day of an appointed feast.

[Lam 2:8] The LORD determined to lay in ruins the wall of the daughter of Zion; he marked it off by the line; he restrained not his hand from destroying; he caused rampart and wall to lament, they languish together.

[Lam 2:9] Her gates have sunk into the ground; he has ruined and broken her bars; her king and princes are among the nations; the law is no more, and her prophets obtain no vision from the LORD.

[Lam 2:10] The elders of the daughter of Zion sit on the ground in silence; they have cast dust on their heads and put on sackcloth; the maidens of Jerusalem have bowed their heads to the ground.

Responsorial. *Mt. 23: 37, 38; Is. 29: 3, 4*

R: Jerusalem, how many times have I wanted to gather your children, like a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you did not want! * Behold, your house will be left deserted.

V: They will surround you with trenches they will raise up a rampart against you, you will be prostrated in the dust.

R: Behold, your house will be left deserted.

Second Reading. *Disc. 2 On the palm branches, 1*

For me there is no other boast than in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A reading from the “Discourses” of the blessed Guerrico, abbot.

In these days in which the memorial of the passion and the cross of the Lord are solemnly celebrated, nothing is more convenient than to preach Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ crucified. For the rest, even on any other day, what else can ever be announced that is more in keeping with the faith, listened to with major profit, or is so much useful to heal the habits? What destroys sins, crucifies vices, nourishes and strengthens the virtues, as much as the remembrance of the Crucified?

The apostle Paul speaks also among the perfect of a hidden, mysterious wisdom; to me, imperfect even to the eyes of men, he speaks instead of Christ crucified, foolishness for those who are lost, but the power of God and wisdom of God for me and for those who are saved (cfr. 1 Cor. 1: 23-24). For me it is a very high and very pure philosophy, thanks to which I make fun of the presumed wisdom of the world and of the flesh.

How much I would retain myself to be perfect and expert in wisdom, if I was to be found an authentic disciple of the Crucified, “who by the work of God has become for us” not only “wisdom and justice”, but also “sanctification and redemption!” (1 Cor. 1: 30).

If therefore you are crucified with Christ, then you are wise, you are just, you are holy, you are free. Is not the one who, raised up from the earth with Christ and who searches for and tastes the heavenly things, considered wise?

Could he, in whom the body of sin has been destroyed so that he may not be anymore the servant of sin, not be just? Is not the one who offers himself as a living host, holy and pleasing to God not holy? Or is he not free, whom the Son of God has freed and who, through the freedom of his conscience, trusts that he can make that free affirmation of the Son: "The prince of the world is coming; he has no power over me" (Jn. 14: 30) his own?

Truly with the Crucified is mercy and great is the redemption (cfr. Ps. 129: 7); he who has redeemed Israel from all its faults, meriting to escape, free, the calumnies of the prince of this world. The ransomed of the Lord therefore say, that he frees from the hand of the enemy and gathers from all the nations, they say- I repeat- with the voice and the spirit of their Master: "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Gal. 6: 14).

Responsorial. *Ph. 1: 21; Gal. 6: 14*

R: For me to live is Christ and to die a gain; * May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

V: Through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world.

R: May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Jer. 11: 18- 12: 13*

Lament of the Prophet.

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.

[Jer 11:18] The LORD made it known to me and I knew; then thou didst show me their evil deeds.

[Jer 11:19] But I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter. I did not know it was against me they devised schemes, saying, "Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name be remembered no more."

[Jer 11:20] But, O LORD of hosts, who judgest righteously, who triest the heart and the mind, let me see thy vengeance upon them, for to thee have I committed my cause.

[Jer 11:21] Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the men of An'athoth, who seek your life, and say, "Do not prophesy in the name of the LORD, or you will die by our hand" --

[Jer 11:22] therefore thus says the LORD of hosts: "Behold, I will punish them; the young men shall die by the sword; their sons and their daughters shall die by famine;

[Jer 11:23] and none of them shall be left. For I will bring evil upon the men of An'athoth, the year of their punishment."

CHAPTE

R 12

[Jer 12:1] Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I complain to thee; yet I would plead my case before thee. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why do all who are treacherous thrive?

[Jer 12:2] Thou plantest them, and they take root; they grow and bring forth fruit; thou art near in their mouth and far from their heart.

[Jer 12:3] But thou, O LORD, knowest me; thou seest me, and triest my mind toward thee. Pull them out like sheep for the slaughter, and set them apart for the day of slaughter.

[Jer 12:4] How long will the land mourn, and the grass of every field wither? For the wickedness of those who dwell in it the beasts and the birds are swept away, because men said, "He will not see our latter end."

[Jer 12:5] "If you have raced with men on foot, and they have wearied you, how will you compete with horses? And if in a safe land you fall down, how will you do in the jungle of the Jordan?

[Jer 12:6] For even your brothers and the house of your father, even they have dealt treacherously with you; they are in full cry after you; believe them not, though they speak fair words to you."

[Jer 12:7] "I have forsaken my house, I have abandoned my heritage; I have given the beloved of my soul into the hands of her enemies.

[Jer 12:8] My heritage has become to me like a lion in the forest, she has lifted up her voice against me; therefore I hate her.

[Jer 12:9] Is my heritage to me like a speckled bird of prey? Are the birds of prey against her round about? Go, assemble all the wild beasts; bring them to devour.

[Jer 12:10] Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard, they have trampled down my portion, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate

wilderness.

[Jer 12:11] They have made it a desolation; desolate, it mourns to me. The whole land is made desolate, but no man lays it to heart.

[Jer 12:12] Upon all the bare heights in the desert destroyers have come; for the sword of the LORD devours from one end of the land to the other; no flesh has peace.

[Jer 12:13] They have sown wheat and have reaped thorns, they have tired themselves out but profit nothing. They shall be ashamed of their harvests because of the fierce anger of the LORD."

Responsorial. *Jer. 11: 9; Ps. 40: 8 – 9*

R: I was like a meek lamb that is brought to the slaughter and I did not know that they were plotting against me, saying: "Let us knock down the tree in its bloom, let us tear it up from the land of the living.

V: All my enemies plotted against me, they slandered me and said:

R: Let us knock down the tree in its bloom, let us tear it up from the land of the living

Second Reading. *Nm. 2-5*

His wounds are our salvation.

A reading from the "Book on the Incarnation of the Word of God and against the Aryans" of St. Athanasius, bishop.

John hands down to us that Jesus said: "I will destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up again". And he adds: "But he was speaking of the temple of his body" (Jn. 2: 19, 21). If the Father had created all things through his Son the Word, it is clear that through him he would have accomplished the same resurrection of his flesh: through him he makes him rise and through him he gives life. He is therefore resurrected according to the flesh since he is man, and he who appeared in human form receives life as a man.

But he himself is the one who, as God, rebuilt his own temple and gave life to his own flesh. While once in fact he says: "He whom the Father has consecrated and sent into the world" (Jn. 10: 36), elsewhere he says also: "I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in the truth" (Jn. 17: 19). But when he says: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (Mk. 15: 34; Ps. 21:2), he speaks in our person, since

“Having assumed the condition of a servant and becoming similar to men, he appeared in human form, he humbled himself making himself obedient unto death and to death on a cross” (Ph. 2: 7 – 8); and, as Isaiah says, “He has taken on himself our sufferings” and he was humiliated for us (Cfr. Is. 53: 4). Not for himself therefore has he been transfixed by suffering, but for us; it was not him who was abandoned by God, but us; and it was for us, who were far away and abandoned, that he came into the world. And when he says: “For this God exalted him and gave him the name that is above all other names” (Ph. 2: 9), he speaks of the temple of his body. It is not the Most High in fact who is exalted, but the flesh of the Most High; and to the flesh of the Most High he has given the name that is above all other names. And when he says: “There was not yet the Spirit, because Jesus had not yet been glorified” (Jn. 7: 39), he speaks of his flesh that had not yet been glorified. It is not the Lord of glory who is glorified, but the flesh of the Lord of glory; it was glorified when with him it ascended into heaven. The Spirit of adoption therefore had not yet been given to men, because the first fruits that the Word had assumed from the human nature had not yet ascended into heaven. When the Scripture uses expressions like “the Son received”, or “the Son was glorified” it speaks therefore of his humanity, not of his divinity. Thus, while in some points he says: “God did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for all of us” (Rm. 8: 32), elsewhere he affirms: “Christ has loved the Church and has given himself for her” (Ep. 5: 25). The immortal God did not come in fact to save himself, but to free us who were lying in death; he did not suffer for himself, but for us, assuming our misery and poverty, in order to give us his riches. His passion is our joy; our resurrection his burial; and his baptism is our sanctification; in fact he says: “I consecrate myself for them, so that they also may be consecrated in the truth” (Jn. 17: 19). His suffering is our salvation since “Through his wounds we have been healed” (Is. 53: 5).

The punishment that he underwent is our peace; in fact “the punishment that gives us salvation has fallen on him”, that is: he has submitted himself to the punishment, in order to obtain peace for us. When on the cross he said: “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” (Lk. 23: 46), he recommended in himself all men, who are vivified in him, to the Father. We are in fact his members, and though being many, we are only one body, that is the Church, as Paul writes to the Galatians: “All of you are

one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3: 28). Therefore he hands over everyone in himself to the Father.

Responsorial. *Is. 53: 5; Ep. 5: 2*

R: He has been pierced through for our crimes, crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that gives us salvation has fallen on him, * through his wounds we have been healed.

V: Christ has loved us and has given himself for us, offering himself to God in a sweet smelling sacrifice:

R: through his wounds we have been healed.

Gospel. *Mt. 26: 14-25*

*The Son of Man will go, as it has been written of him,
but woe to the man by whom he is betrayed.*

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

[Mat 26:14] Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests

[Mat 26:15] and said, "What will you give me if I deliver him to you?" And they paid him thirty pieces of silver.

[Mat 26:16] And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.

[Mat 26:17] Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the passover?"

[Mat 26:18] He said, "Go into the city to a certain one, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at your house with my disciples.'"

[Mat 26:19] And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the passover.

[Mat 26:20] When it was evening, he sat at table with the twelve disciples;

[Mat 26:21] and as they were eating, he said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me."

[Mat 26:22] And they were very sorrowful, and began to say to him one after another, "Is it I, Lord?"

[Mat 26:23] He answered, "He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me, will betray me.

[Mat 26:24] The Son of man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."

[Mat 26:25] Judas, who betrayed him, said, "Is it I, Master?" He said to him, "You have said so."

THURSDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Lam. 2: 11-22*

Lament and imploring.

A reading from the book of Lamentations.

[Lam 2:11] My eyes are spent with weeping; my soul is in tumult; my heart is poured out in grief because of the destruction of the daughter of my people, because infants and babes faint in the streets of the city.

[Lam 2:12] They cry to their mothers, "Where is bread and wine?" as they faint like wounded men in the streets of the city, as their life is poured out on their mothers' bosom.

[Lam 2:13] What can I say for you, to what compare you, O daughter of Jerusalem? What can I liken to you, that I may comfort you, O virgin daughter of Zion? For vast as the sea is your ruin; who can restore you?

[Lam 2:14] Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions; they have not exposed your iniquity to restore your fortunes, but have seen for you oracles false and misleading.

[Lam 2:15] All who pass along the way clap their hands at you; they hiss and wag their heads at the daughter of Jerusalem; "Is this the city which was called the perfection of beauty, the joy of all the earth?"

[Lam 2:16] All your enemies rail against you; they hiss, they gnash their teeth, they cry: "We have destroyed her! Ah, this is the day we longed for; now we have it; we see it!"

[Lam 2:17] The LORD has done what he purposed, has carried out his threat; as he ordained long ago, he has demolished without pity; he has made the enemy rejoice over you, and exalted the might of your foes.

[Lam 2:18] Cry aloud to the Lord! O daughter of Zion! Let tears stream down like a torrent day and night! Give yourself no rest, your eyes no respite!

[Lam 2:19] Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches! Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord! Lift your hands to him for the lives of your children, who faint for hunger at the head of every street.

[Lam 2:20] Look, O LORD, and see! With whom hast thou dealt thus? Should women eat their offspring, the children of their tender care? Should priest and prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord?

[Lam 2:21] In the dust of the streets lie the young and the old; my maidens and my young men have fallen by the sword; in the day of thy anger thou hast slain them, slaughtering without mercy.

[Lam 2:22] Thou didst invite as to the day of an appointed feast my terrors on every side; and on the day of the anger of the LORD none escaped or survived; those whom I dandled and reared my enemy destroyed.

Responsorial. *Is. 53: 6; Jn. 1: 29*

R: We were all lost like a flock, each one following his own way; * the Lord made the iniquity of all of us fall on him.

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

R: The Lord made the iniquity of all of us fall on him.

Second Reading. *Cc. 65-67*

The Lamb slain in sacrifice rescued us from death to life.

A reading from the “Homilies on the Passover” of Melito of Sardis, bishop.

The prophets announced many wonderful things about the Passover mystery that is Christ. To him be glory forever. Amen.

He descended from heaven to earth for the sake of suffering mankind, clothed himself with a human nature through the Virgin Mary, and appearing in our midst as a man with a body capable of suffering, took upon himself the suffering of those who suffered. By his Spirit that could not die, he slew death, the slayer of men. Led forth like a lamb, slain like a sheep, he ransomed us from the servitude of the world, just as he ransomed Israel from the land of Egypt. He freed us from the slavery of the devil, just as he had freed Israel from the hand of Pharaoh; and he has marked our souls

with the signs of his own blood. He has clothed death with dishonour and he has grieved the devil, just as Moses dishonoured and grieved Pharaoh. He has punished wickedness and taken away the children of injustice, just as Moses punished Egypt and took away its children. He has brought us from slavery to freedom, from darkness to light, from death to life, from tyranny to an eternal kingdom.

He is the Passover of our salvation. He was present in many so as to endure many things. In Abel he was slain; in Isaac bound; in Jacob a stranger; in Joseph sold; in Moses exposed; in David persecuted; in the prophets dishonoured. He became incarnate of the Virgin. Not a bone of his was broken on the tree. He was buried in the earth, but he rose from the dead, and was lifted up to the heights of heaven. He is the silent lamb, the slain lamb, who was born of Mary the fair ewe. He was seized from the flock and dragged away to slaughter. Towards evening he was sacrificed, and at night he was buried. But he who had no bone broken upon the cross, was not corrupted in the earth, for he rose from the dead and raised up man from the depths of the grave.

Responsorial. *Rm. 3: 23-25; Jn. 1: 29*

R: All men have sinned and are far away from God's saving presence, but by the free gift of God's grace they are all redeemed through Christ Jesus, who sets them free. * God offered him so that by his death he should become the means by which men's sins are forgiven, through their faith in him.

V: Look, there is the Lamb of God; it is he who takes away the sin of the world.

R: God offered him so that by his death he should become the means by which men's sins are forgiven, through their faith in him.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Jer. 15: 10- 21*

The new vocation of Jeremiah.

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.

[Jer 15:10] Woe is me, my mother, that you bore me, a man of strife and contention to the whole land! I have not lent, nor have I borrowed, yet all of them curse me.

[Jer 15:11] So let it be, O LORD, if I have not entreated thee for their good, if I have not pleaded with thee on behalf of the enemy in the time of trouble and in the time of distress!

[Jer 15:12] Can one break iron, iron from the north, and bronze?

[Jer 15:13] "Your wealth and your treasures I will give as spoil, without price, for all your sins, throughout all your territory.

[Jer 15:14] I will make you serve your enemies in a land which you do not know, for in my anger a fire is kindled which shall burn for ever."

[Jer 15:15] O LORD, thou knowest; remember me and visit me, and take vengeance for me on my persecutors. In thy forbearance take me not away; know that for thy sake I bear reproach.

[Jer 15:16] Thy words were found, and I ate them, and thy words became to me a joy and the delight of my heart; for I am called by thy name, O LORD, God of hosts.

[Jer 15:17] I did not sit in the company of merrymakers, nor did I rejoice; I sat alone, because thy hand was upon me, for thou hadst filled me with indignation.

[Jer 15:18] Why is my pain unceasing, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Wilt thou be to me like a deceitful brook, like waters that fail?

[Jer 15:19] Therefore thus says the LORD: "If you return, I will restore you, and you shall stand before me. If you utter what is precious, and not what is worthless, you shall be as my mouth. They shall turn to you, but you shall not turn to them.

[Jer 15:20] And I will make you to this people a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you, but they shall not prevail over you, for I am with you to save you and deliver you, says the LORD.

[Jer 15:21] I will deliver you out of the hand of the wicked, and redeem you from the grasp of the ruthless."

Responsorial. *Jb. 19: 13-14*

R: My brothers have gone far away from me, * even my friends have become strangers to me.

V: Neighbours and acquaintances have disappeared.

R: even my friends have become strangers to me.

Second Reading. *Disc. 23, 2-3*

The Immortal became mortal, so that he could die for us.

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

“Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die” (Rm. 5: 7). It could happen that one is found who has the courage to die for a just man. But who wants to die for an unjust man, for an impious man, for a wicked man, if not Christ, and he alone, who was so just as to justify also the unjust? My brothers, we had not accomplished any good work, but all wicked deeds. And though the works of men were such, His mercy did not abandon them and while they deserved punishment, in the place of the necessary punishment, he gave his grace, which they did not merit.

He sent his own Son in order to ransom us, not with gold and silver, but at the price of his blood poured out for us: the immaculate lamb led to the slaughter for the stained sheep; and if at least we were only marked, and not rather completely infected! We have therefore received this grace. Let us live worthily of it in order not to wrong it. Such a great doctor has come to us and he frees us from all our sins. If we want to make ourselves sick again, not only do we do evil to ourselves, but we show ourselves ungrateful towards the doctor.

Let us therefore follow the ways that he has indicated, and first of all that of humility, that for us he himself has undertaken: he has shown us the way of humility with his teachings, and he has lived it suffering for us. He would not in fact have suffered, if he had not been humble.

Who would have been able to kill God, if God had not humiliated himself? Christ is the Son of God, and the Son of God is God. He is the Word of God, of whom John says: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God: everything has been made through him and without him nothing was made” (Jn. 1: 1-3).

Who therefore could kill the one through whom everything had been made, and without whom nothing exists? Who could have been able to kill him, if he himself had not humbled himself?

But in what way did he humble himself? John says again: “The Word became flesh and came to live amongst us” (Jn. 1: 14). The Word of God cannot be killed. And so that he who could not die could die for us “the Word became flesh and lived amongst us” The immortal assumed that which is mortal, wanting to die for us and to kill with his death our death. This is what the Lord did, this he worked for us.

Powerful, he let himself be humiliated; humiliated, he let himself be killed; killed, he rose and was exalted, in order not to abandon us, dead, in hell, but to exalt us with him in the resurrection of those dead, who down here he glorified in faith and in the testimony of the just.

Responsorial. 2 Cor. 5: 15; Rm. 4: 25

R: Christ died for all * so that those who live will not live anymore for themselves, but for him who died and was raised again for them.

V: He was put to death for our sins, and has been raised again for our justification,

R: so that those who live will not live anymore for themselves, but for him who died and was raised again for them.

(from the Mass of the Chrism)

Gospel. Lk. 4: 16-21

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me;
for this he has consecrated me with the anointing.*

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.

[Luke 4:16] And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day. And he stood up to read;

[Luke 4:17] and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written,

[Luke 4:18] "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,

[Luke 4:19] to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord."

[Luke 4:20] And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.

[Luke 4:21] And he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

FRIDAY OF THE PASSION OF THE LORD

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Lam. 3: 1-33*

Tears and hope.

A reading from the book of Lamentations.

[Lam 3:1] I am the man who has seen affliction under the rod of his wrath;

[Lam 3:2] he has driven and brought me into darkness without any light;

[Lam 3:3] surely against me he turns his hand again and again the whole day long.

[Lam 3:4] He has made my flesh and my skin waste away, and broken my bones;

[Lam 3:5] he has besieged and enveloped me with bitterness and tribulation;

[Lam 3:6] he has made me dwell in darkness like the dead of long ago.

[Lam 3:7] He has walled me about so that I cannot escape; he has put heavy chains on me;

[Lam 3:8] though I call and cry for help, he shuts out my prayer;

[Lam 3:9] he has blocked my ways with hewn stones, he has made my paths crooked.

[Lam 3:10] He is to me like a bear lying in wait, like a lion in hiding;

[Lam 3:11] he led me off my way and tore me to pieces; he has made me desolate;

[Lam 3:12] he bent his bow and set me as a mark for his arrow.

[Lam 3:13] He drove into my heart the arrows of his quiver;

[Lam 3:14] I have become the laughingstock of all peoples, the burden of their songs all day long.

[Lam 3:15] He has filled me with bitterness, he has sated me with wormwood.

[Lam 3:16] He has made my teeth grind on gravel, and made me cower in ashes;

[Lam 3:17] my soul is bereft of peace, I have forgotten what happiness is;

[Lam 3:18] so I say, "Gone is my glory, and my expectation from the LORD."

[Lam 3:19] Remember my affliction and my bitterness, the wormwood and the gall!

[Lam 3:20] My soul continually thinks of it and is bowed down within me.

[Lam 3:21] But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope:

[Lam 3:22] The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, his mercies never come to an end;

[Lam 3:23] they are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness.

[Lam 3:24] "The LORD is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him."

[Lam 3:25] The LORD is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him.

[Lam 3:26] It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.

[Lam 3:27] It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.

[Lam 3:28] Let him sit alone in silence when he has laid it on him;

[Lam 3:29] let him put his mouth in the dust -- there may yet be hope;

[Lam 3:30] let him give his cheek to the smiter, and be filled with insults.

[Lam 3:31] For the Lord will not cast off for ever,

[Lam 3:32] but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love;

[Lam 3:33] for he does not willingly afflict or grieve the sons of men.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Jer. 6: 26; 25: 34*

R: Cry, Jerusalem, and put off the clothes of joy; cover yourself with ash and sackcloth: * the Saviour of Israel has been killed in you.

V: Shout out, shepherds, roll yourselves in ash and sackcloth; cry like a virgin, my people:

R: the Saviour of Israel has been killed in you.

Second Reading. *Disc. 53 on the Pass. Of the Lord, 4-6*

The cross of Christ is the source of all blessings and the cause of every grace.

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

The Lord was abandoned to the will of the crucifiers and, in order to mock his royal dignity, he was given the instrument of his torture to carry; this happened so that what the prophet Isaiah had foretold could be fulfilled

when he said: “A baby is born for us, a son has been given to us. On his shoulder is the sign of his sovereignty” (Is. 9: 5). When the Lord carried the wood of the cross, which would have then been changed into the symbol of his sovereignty, it was a great mockery for him in the eyes of the wicked, but to the faithful a great mystery was revealed. In fact the most glorious winner over the devil, the most powerful victor of the infernal powers, carried with sweet humility the sign of his triumph on his patient shoulders: instrument of salvation, worthy of adoration on the part of all the nations. And it was exactly as if he wanted, with his example, to make his imitators strong, by saying: “He who does not take up his cross and follow me, is not worthy of me” (Mt. 10: 38).

While the crowd went up with Jesus towards the place of torture, they ran into a man, called Simon of Cyrene, whom they made to carry the cross of the Lord. Even this fact was a premonition of the faith of the pagans, to whom the cross of Christ would not cause shame, but glory.

Thus, the redemption worked by the immaculate lamb and the fullness of all the sacraments will pass from the dominion of the law to the kingdom of love, from the children of the flesh to the children of the spirit. Therefore “Christ our Passover” – says the Apostle – “has been immolated” (1 Cor. 5: 7); he, offering himself to the Father as a new and true sacrifice of reconciliation, was crucified not in the temple, which by then had ceased doing sacred functions, nor inside the city that would be destroyed for its wickedness, but outside the walls; so that, the mystery of the ancient victim having failed, the new victim could be put on a new altar and the cross of Jesus could be the altar not of the temple, but of the world. Therefore, my dearest, the Christ lifted up on the cross leaps alive in front of the eyes of our minds, in all the fullness of his mystery, not as he appeared to the eyes of the wicked, to whom it was said through the mouth of Moses: “Your life will be suspended in front of you like from a thread; you will fear day and night and you will not be sure of your life” (Deut. 28: 66)

O marvellous power of the cross!

O ineffable glory of the Passion, which encloses in itself the tribunal of the Lord, the judgement of the world and the power of the Crucified.

You have truly drawn everything to yourself; Lord, and while you stretched out your hands all day towards the people who did not believe and mocked you (cfr. Rm. 10: 21) you gave to the whole world the gift of understanding and proclaiming your majesty.

You have drawn everything to yourself, Lord, when in the execration for the crime committed by the Jews, all the elements of the creation pronounced one unique sentence; the illuminations of the sky were darkened, the day became night, the earth was shaken by an unusual earthquake; and every creature denied its service to the wicked.

You have drawn everything to yourself, Lord, so that, that which was performed in the unique temple of Jerusalem under the veil of signs, could be celebrated everywhere in the fullness and evidence of the sacraments, by the devotion of all the nations.

Now in fact the order of Levites is more noble, the dignity of the presbyters is higher, the anointing of the bishops is more sacred; because the cross is the source of every blessing, the cause of every grace: through it the faithful are given strength in suffering, glory in humiliation, life in death.

Now therefore, the truth of the material sacrifices having failed, the unique oblation of your Body and of your Blood substitutes with fullness the multiple offering of victims: because you are the true “Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world” (Jn. 1: 29).

And thus, in yourself you bring to fulfilment all the mysteries and the ritual celebrations, so that, as only one is the sacrifice for every victim, so also one will be the kingdom formed from all the nations.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Mt. 26: 38, 45*

R: My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death, stay here and keep watch with me. Now you will see a great crowd that will surround me:
* you will flee and I will go to immolate myself for you.

V: Behold, the hour has come in which the Son of man will be handed over into the hands of sinners:

R: you will flee and I will go to immolate myself for you.

Third Reading. *Book 12*

We have been crucified with Christ.

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

“They then took Jesus and he, carrying the cross, set out towards the place of the Skull, called Golgotha in Hebrew, where they crucified him”

(Jn. 19: 17-18).

They led to death the Author of life himself! But his passion, that took place for our salvation, would have had, through divine virtue and by a design of providence that surpasses by a long way our comprehension, a completely different result from that which the Jews imagined. In fact the passion of Christ was like a snare aimed at the power of death, because the death of the Lord was the beginning and the source of incorruptibility and the newness of life.

Meanwhile he advanced, carrying on his shoulders that wood on which he would be crucified, already condemned to the capital sentence even though completely innocent; and this because of us! Truly taking on himself the punishments that the justice of the law inflicts on sinners, he became for us “malediction, as it is written: Cursed is he who hangs from the wood” (Gal. 3: 13; Deut. 21: 23). All of us, who do not want to obey the divine law were cursed; truly all of us have sinned a lot. And for this he who did not know sin was cursed for us, in order to free us from the ancient curse. It was sufficient in fact that only one who, being God, and above everyone, should suffer for all: with the death of his body, he would gain salvation for every man.

The Christ therefore carried the cross meant for us, certainly not for himself if we look at the condemnation of the law. In fact, as he went amongst the dead for us and not for himself, in order to lead us to eternal life after having destroyed the kingdom of the dead, so also he took on himself the cross that was due to us, condemning in himself the condemnation derived from the law. For this afterwards every iniquitous man will close his mouth, as it is sung in the psalms (cfr. Ps. 106: 42), because he who is innocent has been killed for the sins of all.

Moreover, from this act of Christ we can draw a great incentive to embrace more decisively the way of holiness. In fact, we will not reach perfection and the total union with God, if not by preferring his love to the earthly life and by resolving ourselves to fight courageously for the truth, as the actual circumstances also exhort us to do.

Our Lord Jesus Christ says very well: “He who does not take up his cross and follow me, is not worthy of me” (Mt. 10: 38). In effect to take up the cross signifies, I think, nothing else than to renounce to the world for him and to put off, if it is necessary, the life of the body for the goods that

we hope for, from the moment that our Lord Jesus Christ, was not ashamed to carry the cross that was meant for us and to suffer out of love for us.

Those then who follow the Christ are also crucified with him: dying to their old conduct, they are introduced into a new life that is in conformity to the Gospel.

For this Paul said: “Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified their flesh with its passions and its desires” (Gal. 5: 24).

And again, as if speaking of himself, he says to all: “In reality through the law I am dead to the law in order to live for God. I have been crucified with Christ and it is not I who live anymore, but Christ lives in me” (Gal. 2: 19-20).

To others then he writes: “If therefore you are dead with Christ to the elements of the world, why do you let yourselves be” conditioned, “as if you were still living in the world”? (Col. 2: 20). In fact, the death of the worldly element that is in us introduces us into conversion and into the life of Christ.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Mt. 27: 45, 46; Jn. 19: 30, 34*

R: Darkness fell on the whole earth, when the Jews had crucified Jesus; towards the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice: My God, why have you abandoned me? * And, bowing his head, he gave up his spirit. Then one of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance, and immediately blood and water flowed out.

V: After having received the vinegar, Jesus said: All is accomplished!

R: And bowing his head, he gave up his spirit. Then one of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance, and immediately blood and water flowed out.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Jer. 16: 1-15*

The loneliness of the prophet.

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.

[Jer 16:1] The word of the LORD came to me:

[Jer 16:2] "You shall not take a wife, nor shall you have sons or daughters in this place.

[Jer 16:3] For thus says the LORD concerning the sons and daughters who are born in this place, and concerning the mothers who bore them and the fathers who begot them in this land:

[Jer 16:4] They shall die of deadly diseases. They shall not be lamented, nor shall they be buried; they shall be as dung on the surface of the ground. They shall perish by the sword and by famine, and their dead bodies shall be food for the birds of the air and for the beasts of the earth.

[Jer 16:5] "For thus says the LORD: Do not enter the house of mourning, or go to lament, or bemoan them; for I have taken away my peace from this people, says the LORD, my steadfast love and mercy.

[Jer 16:6] Both great and small shall die in this land; they shall not be buried, and no one shall lament for them or cut himself or make himself bald for them.

[Jer 16:7] No one shall break bread for the mourner, to comfort him for the dead; nor shall any one give him the cup of consolation to drink for his father or his mother.

[Jer 16:8] You shall not go into the house of feasting to sit with them, to eat and drink.

[Jer 16:9] For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Behold, I will make to cease from this place, before your eyes and in your days, the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride.

[Jer 16:10] "And when you tell this people all these words, and they say to you, 'Why has the LORD pronounced all this great evil against us? What is our iniquity? What is the sin that we have committed against the LORD our God?'

[Jer 16:11] then you shall say to them: 'Because your fathers have forsaken me, says the LORD, and have gone after other gods and have served and worshiped them, and have forsaken me and have not kept my law,

[Jer 16:12] and because you have done worse than your fathers, for behold, every one of you follows his stubborn evil will, refusing to listen to

me;

[Jer 16:13] therefore I will hurl you out of this land into a land which neither you nor your fathers have known, and there you shall serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no favor.'

[Jer 16:14] "Therefore, behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when it shall no longer be said, 'As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt,'

[Jer 16:15] but 'As the LORD lives who brought up the people of Israel out of the north country and out of all the countries where he had driven them.' For I will bring them back to their own land which I gave to their fathers.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Is. 53: 2, 4, 5*

R: Behold, we have seen him, without appearance or beauty: in him there is no splendour. He burdened himself with our sins, he took on himself our pains. He has been pierced through for our crimes, * by his wounds we have been healed.

V: He has truly burdened himself with our weaknesses, he has taken on himself our pains,

R: by his wounds we have been healed.

Second Reading. *Cat. 3: 13-19*

The strength of the blood of Christ.

A reading from the "Catechesis" of St. John Chrysostom, bishop.

Do you want to know the strength of the blood of Christ? Let us recall the figure, running through the pages of the Old Testament. "Immolate, says Moses, a one year old lamb and with its blood sign the doorposts" (Ex. 12: 5). What do you say, Moses? When has the blood of a lamb ever saved a rational man?

Certainly, he seems to answer, not because it is blood, but because it is the image of the blood of the Lord. Much more than then will the enemy pass without harming if he will see on the doorposts not the blood of the old symbol, but that of the new reality, alive and shining on the lips of the faithful, on the door of the temple of Christ. If you want to understand still more profoundly the strength of this blood, consider from where it begins to flow and from which spring it gushes. It was poured out on the cross and

gushed out from the ribs of the Lord. To Jesus dead and still hanging on the cross, the Gospel narrates, that a soldier drew near and opened his ribs with a stroke of the lance: and blood and water came out. One is the symbol of baptism, the other of the Eucharist.

The soldier opened the ribs: he opened the sacred temple, where I have discovered a treasure and where I have the joy of finding splendid riches. The same thing happens for the Lamb: the Jews slit the victims throat and I enjoy salvation, the fruit of that sacrifice.

And blood and water came out from his side (cfr. Jn. 19: 34). My dearest, do not pass too easily over this mystery. I have still another mystical significance to explain to you. I said that that water and that blood are symbols of the baptism and of the Eucharist. Now the Church is born from these two sacraments, from this bath of regeneration and of the renewal of the Holy Spirit through the baptism and the Eucharist.

And the symbols of the baptism and of the Eucharist have come out of the ribs. Therefore it is from his ribs that Christ has formed the Church, as from the ribs of Adam, Eve was formed.

For this Moses, speaking of the first man, uses the expression: “bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh” (Gen. 2: 23), in order to indicate to us the ribs of the Lord. Similarly, as God formed the woman from the side of Adam, so also Christ has given us the water and the blood from his side in order to form the Church. And as the side of Adam was touched by God during sleep, so also Christ has given us the blood and the water during the sleep of his death.

Do you see in what way Christ unites himself to his Bride, do you see with what food he nourishes us.

Through his blood we are born, with his blood we nourish our life. As the woman nourishes the son with her own milk, so also Christ constantly nourishes those whom he has regenerated with his blood.

Responsorial. *cfr. 1 Pt. 1: 18-19; Ep. 2: 18; 1 Jn. 1: 7*

R: It was not at the cost of corruptible things, like silver and gold, that we were freed; but with the precious blood of Christ, lamb without stain; * through him we can present ourselves to the Father in only one Spirit.

V: The blood of Jesus, Son of God, purifies us from every sin;

R: through him we can present ourselves to the Father in only one Spirit.

Third Reading. Book 12

*The Christ handed over his soul into the hands of the Father,
opening also for us new enlightening hope.*

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

“After having received the vinegar, Jesus said: All is accomplished! And, bowing his head, he gave up his spirit” (Jn. 19: 30).

Justly he says: “All is accomplished”. The hour has by now struck to carry the announcement of salvation to the spirits who are to be found in Sheol. He has come in fact to bring about his kingdom as much over the dead as over the living; the same death he suffered for us in the flesh that he had assumed, in communion with our nature, he who by his nature, as God, is life itself. He wanted all this expressly in order to dethrone the powers of the underworld, and to prepare in this way the return of the human nature to the true life, he “the first fruit of those who are dead” (1 Cor. 15: 20) and “first born of those who rise from the dead” (Col. 1: 16).

“He bowed his head”: that is characteristic of one who is dead, when, the spirit that holds the body united passes away, the muscles and the nerves slacken. For this the expression of the evangelist is not entirely appropriate, even if he immediately adds another phrase, which is also used commonly to indicate that someone is dead: “he gave up his spirit”.

It seems that almost compelled by a particular inspiration the evangelist had said not simply “died”, but “Gave up his spirit”. Gave up, that is his spirit into the hands of God the Father, according to what he himself had said also through the prophetic voice of the psalmist: “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” (Lk. 23: 46; cfr. Ps. 30: 6). But in the meantime the strength and the sense of these words established the beginning and the foundation of the blessed hope for us.

It has to be believed in fact that the souls of the saints, coming out from the body, not only entrust themselves into the hands of the most beloved Father, God of goodness and mercy, but on the contrary many times they hurry towards the Father of all and our Saviour Jesus Christ who has opened the way for us. Nor is it just to think like some pagans, that these souls roam around the tombs waiting for the sacrifices offered for the dead, or that they are thrown down like the souls of the sinners, into places of immense torment, that is into hell.

The Christ delivers his soul into the hands of the Father, so that in it and through it we may draw the beginning of bright hopes feeling and believing firmly that, after having borne the death of the flesh, we will be in the hands of God, in a state of life that is infinitely better than when we were in the flesh. For this the Doctor of the nations writes that it is better to be freed from the body in order to be with Christ (cfr. Ph. 1: 23).

Responsorial. *Cfr. Is. 57: 1-2; 53: 7*

R: The righteous perish, and no one takes it to heart; the devout are taken away, while no one understands. For the righteous are taken away from calamity. * He enters into peace.

V: Like a lamb without voice in front of its shearers, he did not open his mouth; with oppression and unjust sentences he was removed from our midst.

R: He enters into peace.

HOLY SATURDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Lam. 5: 1-22*

Imploration for the salvation of the people.

A reading from the book of Lamentations.

[Lam 5:1] Remember, O LORD, what has befallen us; behold, and see our disgrace!

[Lam 5:2] Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers, our homes to aliens.

[Lam 5:3] We have become orphans, fatherless; our mothers are like widows.

[Lam 5:4] We must pay for the water we drink, the wood we get must be bought.

[Lam 5:5] With a yoke on our necks we are hard driven; we are weary, we are given no rest.

[Lam 5:6] We have given the hand to Egypt, and to Assyria, to get bread enough.

[Lam 5:7] Our fathers sinned, and are no more; and we bear their iniquities.

[Lam 5:8] Slaves rule over us; there is none to deliver us from their hand.

[Lam 5:9] We get our bread at the peril of our lives, because of the sword in the wilderness.

[Lam 5:10] Our skin is hot as an oven with the burning heat of famine.

[Lam 5:11] Women are ravished in Zion, virgins in the towns of Judah.

[Lam 5:12] Princes are hung up by their hands; no respect is shown to the elders.

[Lam 5:13] Young men are compelled to grind at the mill; and boys stagger under loads of wood.

[Lam 5:14] The old men have quit the city gate, the young men their music.

[Lam 5:15] The joy of our hearts has ceased; our dancing has been turned to mourning.

[Lam 5:16] The crown has fallen from our head; woe to us, for we have sinned!

[Lam 5:17] For this our heart has become sick, for these things our eyes have grown dim,

[Lam 5:18] for Mount Zion which lies desolate; jackals prowl over it.

[Lam 5:19] But thou, O LORD, dost reign for ever; thy throne endures to all generations.

[Lam 5:20] Why dost thou forget us for ever, why dost thou so long forsake us?

[Lam 5:21] Restore us to thyself, O LORD, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old!

[Lam 5:22] Or hast thou utterly rejected us? Art thou exceedingly angry with us?

Responsorial. *Cfr. Jb. 16: 16; Lam. 1: 12*

R: My eyes have become darkened with crying, since he who consoles me has gone far away from me. See, O you nations, * if there is a pain that is similar to my pain.

V: All of you who pass by the way consider and observe

R: if there is a pain that is similar to my pain.

Second Reading.

The descent of the Lord in to Hell.

A reading from an ancient “Homily on Holy Saturday”

What is happening? Today there is a great silence over the earth, a great silence, and stillness, a great silence because the King sleeps; the earth was in terror and was still, because God slept in the flesh and raised up those who were sleeping from the ages. God has died in the flesh, and the underworld has trembled.

Truly he goes to seek out our first parent like a lost sheep; he wishes to visit those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. He goes to free the prisoner Adam and his fellow-prisoner Eve from their pains, he who is God, and Adam’s son.

The Lord goes in to them holding his victorious weapon, his cross. When Adam, the first created man, sees him, he strikes his breast in terror and calls out to all: “My Lord be with you all”: and Christ in reply says to

Adam: “And with your spirit”. And grasping his hand he raises him up, saying: “Awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ shall give you light.

I am your God, who for your sake became your son, who for you and your descendants now speak and command with authority those in prison: Come forth, and those in darkness: Have light, and those who sleep: Rise.

“I command you: Awake, sleeper, I have not made you to be held a prisoner in the underworld. Arise from the dead; I am the life of the dead. Arise, O man, work of my hands, arise, you who were fashioned in my image. Rise, let us go hence; for you in me and I in you, together we are one undivided person.

“For you, I your God became your son; for you, I the Master took on your form, that of slave; for you, I who am above the heavens came on earth and under the earth; for you, man, I became as a man without help, free among the dead; for you, who left a garden, I was handed over to Jews from a garden and crucified in a garden.

“Look at the spittle on my face, which I received because of you, in order to restore you to that first divine inbreathing at creation. See the blows on my cheeks, which I accepted in order to refashion your distorted form to my own image.

“See the scourging of my back, which I accepted in order to disperse the load of your sins which was laid upon your back. See my hands nailed to the tree for a good purpose, for you, who stretched out your hand to the tree for an evil one.

“I slept on the cross and a sword pierced my side, for you, who slept in paradise and brought forth Eve from your side. My side healed the pain of your side; my sleep will release you from your sleep in Hades; my sword has checked the sword that was turned against you.

“But arise, let us go hence. The enemy brought you out of the land of paradise; I will reinstate you, no longer in paradise, but on the throne of heaven. I denied you the tree of life, which was a figure, but now I myself am united to you, I who am life. I posted the cherubim to guard you as they would slaves; now I make the cherubim worship you as they would God.

“The cherubim throne has been prepared, the bearers are ready and waiting, the bridal chamber is in order, the food is provided, the everlasting houses and rooms are in readiness, the treasures of good things have been opened; the kingdom of heaven has been prepared before the ages”.

Responsorial.

R: Our shepherd, the source of living water, has departed. At his passing the sun was darkened, for he who held the first man captive is now taken captive himself. * Today our Saviour has shattered the bars and burst the gates of death.

V: He has torn down the barricades of hell and overthrown the power of Satan.

R: Today our Saviour has shattered the bars and burst the gates of death.

Third Reading. *Book 5, 10*

The death of Christ and of the Christians.

A reading from the “Commentary on the Letter to the Romans” of Origen, presbyter.

When the Apostle says: “ We have been baptised in his death, completely united to him with a death similar to his” (Rm. 6: 3, 5), he wants to demonstrate through this that we are dead with Christ to sin, Christ having died for our sins, according to the Scriptures (cfr. 1 Cor. 15: 3). And in virtue of his death he has given to every believer, as a reward of his faith, the gift to die to his own sin: to those that is who retain through faith to be dead with him, crucified and buried with him, for which the sin in them, like in the dead, cannot act anymore; for this they are said to be dead to sin.

The Apostle therefore affirms: “If we are dead with him, then we will also live with him” (2 Tm. 2: 11). He does not say: “we have lived”, as he says “we are dead”; but “we will live”, in order to demonstrate how the death acts in the present, the life instead in the future, that is “when Christ will be manifested”, who is “our life”, hidden in God (cfr. Col. 3: 3-4). Now however, as the same Paul teaches us, “in us death works” (2 Cor. 4: 12).

But it seems to me that the same death operating in us presents some different aspects. In Christ in fact there were three moments: another was the time of death literally when “Jesus gave a loud cry and gave up his spirit” (Mt. 27: 50); another in which he lay in the sealed tomb; another instead when, searched for in the tomb, he was not to be found because he had already risen, and to no one was allowed to see the first moments of that glorious resurrection. So also to us, who believe in him, is given the possibility to experience this triple kind of death.

In the first place we must show in ourselves the death of Christ with the profession of faith: “For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved” (Rm. 10: 10). In the second place with the mortification of the earthly members, because now we carry always “in our bodies the death of Jesus” (2 Cor. 4: 10); and this is what the words “in us death operates” (ivi. 4: 12) means. In the third place, when we have already risen from the dead, walking, “in a new life” (Rm. 6: 4).

And in order to explain this with major clearness and briefness, we say that the first moment of death consists in the renouncement to the world; the second to have also repudiated the passions of the flesh; while the fullness of perfection is in the light of wisdom, and this is the third moment, that of the resurrection. Above all, these diverse aspects that are found in every believer, and the various steps of progress, can be known and discerned only by him to whom the secrets of hearts have been manifested.

The Christ however spontaneously “undressed himself, assuming the condition of a servant” (Ph. 2: 7), and he bore the rule of the tyrant, “making himself obedient unto death” (ivi. 2: 8). But with his bloody sacrifice he defeated the master of death, that is the devil, in order to free those who were slaves of death. In fact, after having enchained the devil and triumphed through his cross, he followed him into his own house, the kingdom of the dead and of the underworld, where he sacked his goods, that is he freed the souls that he held prisoners. Thus exactly what Jesus himself had said with mysterious words, as the gospel narrates happened: “No one can enter into the house of a strong man and rob his things, if first he has not tied up the strong man” (Mk. 3: 27). First therefore he tied him by means of the cross; he then entered into his house, hell, whence “Ascending into heaven, he brought with him prisoners” (Ep. 4: 8): that is to say those who rise with him, and enter into the holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem. Where justly the Apostle says: “Death has no more power over him” (Rm. 6: 9).

Responsorial. *Cfr. Jl. 1. 8, 13; Zep. 1: 14*

R: Cry like a virgin, my people, shout out, shepherds wrapped in sackcloth and in ashes: * because the great and bitter day of the Lord is near.

V: Gird yourself in sackcloth, o priests, and cry you ministers of the altar, sprinkle ash on your head,

R: because the great and bitter day of the Lord is near.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Jer. 20: 7-18*

Anxiety of the Prophet.

A reading from the prophet Jeremiah.

[Jer 20:7] O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived; thou art stronger than I, and thou hast prevailed. I have become a laughingstock all the day; every one mocks me.

[Jer 20:8] For whenever I speak, I cry out, I shout, "Violence and destruction!" For the word of the LORD has become for me a reproach and derision all day long.

[Jer 20:9] If I say, "I will not mention him, or speak any more in his name," there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot.

[Jer 20:10] For I hear many whispering. Terror is on every side! "Denounce him! Let us denounce him!" say all my familiar friends, watching for my fall. "Perhaps he will be deceived, then we can overcome him, and take our revenge on him."

[Jer 20:11] But the LORD is with me as a dread warrior; therefore my persecutors will stumble, they will not overcome me. They will be greatly shamed, for they will not succeed. Their eternal dishonor will never be forgotten.

[Jer 20:12] O LORD of hosts, who triest the righteous, who seest the heart and the mind, let me see thy vengeance upon them, for to thee have I committed my cause.

[Jer 20:13] Sing to the LORD; praise the LORD! For he has delivered the life of the needy from the hand of evildoers.

[Jer 20:14] Cursed be the day on which I was born! The day when my mother bore me, let it not be blessed!

[Jer 20:15] Cursed be the man who brought the news to my father, "A son is born to you," making him very glad.

[Jer 20:16] Let that man be like the cities which the LORD overthrew without pity; let him hear a cry in the morning and an alarm at noon,

[Jer 20:17] because he did not kill me in the womb; so my mother would have been my grave, and her womb for ever great.

[Jer 20:18] Why did I come forth from the womb to see toil and sorrow, and spend my days in shame?

Responsorial. *Ps. 87: 5-6, 7*

R: I am numbered among those who go down into the grave, * I am like a man who is already without strength, my bed is among the dead.

V: You have thrown me into the deep pit, into the dark and the shadow of death.

R: I am like a man who is already without strength, my bed is among the dead.

Second Reading. *Book 12*

Christ with the death of his body has redeemed the life of everyone.

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

“Taking Jesus’ body, they wrapped it, with spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid” (Jn. 19: 40-41).

He who died for us according to the flesh was numbered amongst the dead; it is to be understood however that he has life in himself and in the Father, and thus it is in reality. But in order to fulfil every justice (cfr. Mt. 3: 15), that is in order to share every reality that is connected to the human condition, he subjected the temple of his body not only to death that was spontaneously accepted, but also to other situations that follow death: the burial and the placing in a tomb.

In the garden therefore there was a tomb, and this was new, says the evangelist; which as a symbol signifies that with the death of Christ is prepared for us and conceded the return to paradise. He in fact has entered into it as a precursor for us.

The fact then that the tomb was new, indicates the new and unheard of return of Jesus from the dead to life and the restoration operated by him in comparison to the corruption.

In fact our new death has been transformed, through the death of Christ, into a type of sleep or rest. We live therefore like those who, according to the Scriptures, live for the Lord (cfr. Rm. 14: 8).

For this the blessed Apostle Paul, in order to indicate those who have died in Christ uses almost always the expression “Those who have fallen asleep” (cfr. 1 Cor. 15: 6, 18, 20, 51; 1 Th. 4: 13-14, etc.).

In the past, certainly, the strength of death prevailed against our nature. It “reigned from Adam up to Moses, also on those who had not sinned with a transgression similar to that of Adam” (Rm. 5: 14); and in the likeness of him we bear the image of the earthly man, suffering death that hung over us because of the curse of God.

But when there appeared amongst us the second Adam, divine and heavenly, who fighting for the life of everyone, with the death of his body gave back life to everyone and destroying the kingdom of death he rose, then we have been transformed in his image and we face a death that is in a certain sense new. It in fact does not dissolve us in a corruption without end, but infuses in us a sleep that is full of consoling hope, in likeness to him who has opened for us this way, that is Christ.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Mt. 27: 62-66; Mk. 15: 46*

R: After having buried the Lord, they sealed the tomb and rolled a big stone against the entrance of the tomb, * they placed soldiers to guard it.

V: The high priest gathered together in front of Pilate and asked him for the tomb to be guarded. “Go – he answered – and make the tomb secure as you know how”. So they went and made the tomb secure.

R: They placed soldiers to guard it

Third Reading. *Disc. 70 on the Pass. Of the Lord, 3-5*

If we persevere with him with him we will also reign.

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

This most special gift was given to us in the Christ: that our passable nature would not remain any more subjected to death after he, who was of an immortal nature, had submitted himself; and that exactly from that which in him could not die would be resurrected in us that which was dead.

In order to liken us indissolubly to this sacrament, my dearest, we must dedicate ourselves with the maximum interior and exterior intensity. If in fact it is a very serious thing to neglect the feast of Passover, it is even more serious to attend the liturgical assemblies, without however participating in the passion of the Lord.

When the Apostle affirms: “If we persevere with him, with him we will also reign” (2 Tm. 2: 12) he wants to say exactly this: he who does not suffer, die and rise with him does not truly love the suffering, dead and risen Christ.

These realities have already had a beginning in all the children of the Church in the mystery of the regeneration, where we have the death to sin, the new life of the resurrected and the triple immersion, in order to imitate the three days of the burial of Jesus. In a way, that having been removed so to say the tumulus of the sepulchre, those whom the womb of the baptismal font had received old, are regenerated anew by the water. But it is necessary to bring to a conclusion with the life that which the faithful, born from the Holy Spirit, have celebrated in the sacrament; they therefore, welcoming and carrying the cross, must check all that remains in them of the worldly customs.

If someone therefore feels that the requirements of the Christian observations surpass his possibilities, and if his passions push him to deviate from the right path, let him turn to the cross of the Lord and crucify to the wood of life the impulses of his wicked will. Invoke the Lord with the words of the prophet, saying: “You make my flesh tremble with fear, I fear your judgements” (Ps. 118: 120).

What does it mean to have the flesh crucified with the nails of the fear of God, if not to detain the senses from the illusion of illicit desires, for fear of the divine judgement? He who resists sin and kills his concupiscence in order not to do something that is worthy of death, can say with the Apostle: “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world” (Gal. 6: 14).

The Christian therefore establishes himself there where Christ takes him with himself, and he directs all his steps there where he knows that his human nature has been saved. The passion of the Lord will last till the end of the world. And since in his saints Jesus himself is honoured and loved, and in his poor Jesus himself is nourished and clothed, so also all of us who suffer persecution for the sake of justice, suffer with him. Unless one wants

to think that all the persecutions and the battles that raged against the blessed martyrs are over, for the fact that the faith has spread throughout the earth and the number of the wicked has diminished; as if the necessity of carrying the cross fell only on those on whom were inflicted atrocious torments, in order to dissuade them from the love of Christ.

But the souls of the just, who have learnt to fear and to love only one God, and to hope only in him, after having overcome the passions and crucified the senses, do not give in to any fear of the enemies, nor to any compromise. They have in fact preferred the will of God to themselves, and the more they are despised the more they love through the love of God.

Therefore, my dearest, the holy Passover is celebrated worthily in these members of the body of Christ, and they do not lack anything of the victory brought by the passion of the Saviour.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Gal. 6: 14*

R: We must glory in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our salvation, life and resurrection. * Through his cross we have been saved and freed.

V: O blessed cross, on you was hung the Saviour of the world, in you the King of the angels triumphed.

R: Through his cross we have been saved and freed.