

WEEK 3

SUNDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading *Rm. 8: 1-17*

We are not walking according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although your bodies are dead because of sin, your spirits are alive because of righteousness.

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you.

So then, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh -- for if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of

God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Responsorial *Rm. 8: 3, 4; Is. 53: 12, 11*

R: God, sending his own Son in a flesh similar to that of sin and for sin, has condemned sin in the flesh * so that the justice of the law could be fulfilled in us.

V: He has handed himself over to death; and he, my just servant, will justify many and he will take on himself their iniquity:

R: so that the justice of the law could be fulfilled in us.

Second Reading *Hom. 14:3*

We are not simply heirs, but co-heirs of Christ.

From the “Homily on the Letter to the Romans” of St. John Chrysostom, bishop.

“Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit who makes you sons. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father’” (Rm. 8: 14-15).

The neophytes who are made to say this for the first time in the ritual prayer know how marvellous this is. How? – will you say – did they also not call God, Father? Do you not see what Moses says: “Have you forgotten the God who procreated you?” (Deut. 32: 18). Do you not see that Malachi, in a rebuking tone, says: “Have we not perhaps been created by the unique God and do we not all have only one Father?” (Mal. 2: 10). It is true, and we have many other passages; however we never read that they had called God with this name or had invoked him like this.

All of us instead, priests and faithful, princes and subjects, have been ordered to pray like this and this is the first word that we have pronounced after that marvellous birth, after the new and stupendous rite of the neophytes. For the rest, even if they sometimes had called him Father, they did it instinctively; those instead who live in the economy of grace, feel him as a Father because the Spirit moves them. There is in fact the Spirit of wisdom,

on the strength of which simple and ignorant men become wise, through which simple men resurrect the dead and cast out demons; there is the spirit of healing, the spirit of prophecy and the spirit of tongues. Thus, there is also the spirit of adoption. And as we recognize the spirit of prophecy every time that the one who possesses it foretells future events, saying not what he thinks, but that which grace moves him to say, so also it happens for the spirit of adoption: every time he who has received it calls God with the name of Father, he is moved by the Spirit. And to show the authenticity of the things, the Apostle expresses himself in the Hebrew language: he does not only say “Father”, but “Abba, Father”, a term with which the children call their father.

After having spoken therefore of the difference that is derived from the new set up of life through the grace and freedom received, he brings another testimony of the excellency of this adoption: “The Spirit himself attests to our spirit that we are children of God. And if we are children, we are also heirs” (Rm. 8: 16-17). Heirs? Yes, exactly: “Heirs of God” he says. On the contrary, not only heirs, but also “co-heirs of Christ” (Rm. 8: 17). Do you see how he insists in demonstrating our intimacy with the Lord? Since in fact not always the children are heirs, he states precisely that we are children and heirs. And since not always is he a heir to great riches, he affirms that we have obtained also this: of being children of God. And again, since it can happen that one can be heir of God, but not exactly co-heir with the Only begotten, he demonstrates that exactly this has been given to us. Now, if it is an ineffable grace to be children of God, think how much more will it be to also be heirs. And if this is already extraordinary, even more is it to be co-heirs.

After having demonstrated then that it is not only a gift of grace, making an appeal also to the faith he adds: “If we truly participate in his sufferings in order to participate also in his glory” (Rm. 8: 17). If in fact we are similar to him in the sufferings, much more will we be in the reward. Will he who was so lavish with his gifts to those who as yet had done anything good, when he will see that we have borne so many struggles and suffering, not pay us with greater generosity?

Responsorial *Rm. 8: 16 – 17; Tit. 3: 4, 5, 7*

R: The Spirit itself attests to our spirit that we are children of God. And if we are children, we are also heirs; heirs of God, co-heirs of Christ, * if we truly participate in his sufferings, in order to participate also in his glory.

V: God, our Saviour, has saved us through the bath of regeneration, so that justified by his grace we may become heirs, according to the hope, of eternal life.

R: if we truly participate in his sufferings, in order to participate also in his glory.

CYCLE 2

First Reading *Gen. 18:1-33*

Promise of the birth of Isaac, and intercession of Abraham in favour of Sodom.

And the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men stood in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the earth, and said, "My lord, if I have found favour in your sight, do not pass by your servant.

Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, while I fetch a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on -- since you have come to your servant." So they said, "Do as you have said." And Abraham hastened into the tent to Sarah, and said, "Make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes."

And Abraham ran to the herd, and took a calf, tender and good, and gave it to the servant, who hastened to prepare it. Then he took curds, and milk, and the calf that he had prepared, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree while they ate. They said to him, "Where is Sarah your wife?" And he said, "She is in the tent." The LORD said, "I will surely return to you in the spring, and Sarah your wife shall have a son." And Sarah was listening at the tent door behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; it

had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. So Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have grown old, and my husband is old, shall I have pleasure?"

The LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, and say, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, in the spring, and Sarah shall have a son." But Sarah denied, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. He said, "No, but you did laugh."

Then the men set out from there, and they looked toward Sodom; and Abraham went with them to set them on their way. The LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by him? No, for I have chosen him, that he may charge his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him."

Then the LORD said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomor'rah is great and their sin is very grave, I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry which has come to me; and if not, I will know." So the men turned from there, and went toward Sodom; but Abraham still stood before the LORD. Then Abraham drew near, and said, "Will you indeed destroy the righteous with the wicked? Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will you then destroy the place and not spare it for the fifty righteous who are in it? Far be it from you to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from you! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

And the LORD said, "If I find at Sodom fifty righteous in the city, I will spare the whole place for their sake."

Abraham answered, "Behold, I have taken upon myself to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes. Suppose five of the fifty righteous are lacking? Will you destroy the whole city for lack of five?" And he said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there." Again he spoke to him, and said, "Suppose forty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of forty I will not do it." Then he said, "Oh let

not the Lord be angry, and I will speak. Suppose thirty are found there." He answered, "I will not do it, if I find thirty there." He said, "Behold, I have taken upon myself to speak to the Lord. Suppose twenty are found there." He answered, "For the sake of twenty I will not destroy it." Then he said, "Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak again but this once. Suppose ten are found there." He answered, "For the sake of ten I will not destroy it." And the LORD went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.

Responsorial *Rm. 4: 20, 19; Lk. 1: 37*

R: Abraham, because of the promise of God, did not hesitate with disbelief:
* since nothing is impossible to God.

V: He did not waver, though seeing his own body as already dead:

R: since nothing is impossible to God.

Second Reading *Nm. 18: 1 – 2; 19 – 20*

God wants everything to take place in peace and harmony.

From the “Letter to the Corinthians” of St. Clement I, pope and martyr.

But what shall we say concerning David, to whom such testimony was borne, and of whom God said, “I have found a man after Mine own heart, (Act. 13: 22) David the son of Jesse; and in everlasting mercy have I anointed him?” (Ps. 88: 21). Yet this very man said to God, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, according to your great mercy; and according to the multitude of your compassions, blot out my transgression (Ps. 50: 3). Thus the humility and godly submission of so great and illustrious men have rendered not only us, but also all the generations before us, better; even as many as have received His oracles in fear and truth. Wherefore, having so many great and glorious examples set before us, let us turn again to the practice of that peace which from the beginning was the mark set before us; and let us look steadfastly to the Father and Creator of the universe, and cleave to His mighty and surpassingly great gifts and benefactions of peace. Let us contemplate Him with our understanding, and look with the eyes of our soul to His long-suffering will. Let us reflect how free from wrath He is towards all His creation.

The heavens, revolving under His government, are subject to Him in peace. Day and night run the course appointed by Him, in no wise hindering each other. The sun and moon, with the companies of the stars, roll on in harmony according to His command, within their prescribed limits, and without any deviation. The fruitful earth, according to His will, brings forth food in abundance, at the proper seasons, for man and beast and all the living beings upon it, never hesitating, nor changing any of the ordinances which He has fixed. The unsearchable places of abysses, and the indescribable arrangements of the lower world, are restrained by the same laws. The vast immeasurable sea, gathered together by His working into various basins, never passes beyond the bounds placed around it, but does as He has commanded. For He said, "Thus far shall you come, and your waves shall be broken within you." (Jb. 38: 11). The ocean, impassable to man, and the worlds beyond it, is regulated by the same enactments of the Lord.

The seasons of spring, summer, autumn, and winter, peacefully give place to one another. The winds in their several quarters fulfil, at the proper time, their service without hindrance. The ever-flowing fountains, formed both for enjoyment and health, furnish without fail their waters for the life of men. The very smallest of living beings meet together in peace and concord. All these the great Creator and Lord of all has appointed to exist in peace and harmony; while He does good to all, but most abundantly to us who have fled for refuge to His compassions through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be glory and majesty for ever and ever. Amen.

Responsorial *Mal. 2: 10; Mt. 23: 8*

R: Do we all not have only one Father? Has not one unique God created us?

* Why therefore do you act with perfidy against one another?

V: You are all brothers.

R: Why therefore do you act with perfidy against one another?

YEAR A

Gospel *Mt. 4: 12 – 23*

Now when he heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth he went and dwelt in Caper'na-um by the sea, in the territory of Zeb'ulun and Naph'tali, that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "The land of Zeb'ulun and the land of Naph'tali, toward the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles -- the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned."

From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zeb'edee and John his brother, in the boat with Zeb'edee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

And he went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people.

Third Reading *Disc. 144: 1, 4*

Humble yourselves under the powerful hand of God.

From the "Discourses" of St. Caesar of Arles, bishop.

During the reading of the gospel, dearest brothers, we have heard: "Convert, because the kingdom of God is near" (Mt. 3: 2). The kingdom of heaven is Christ, who, as it is known to all, is the connoisseur of the good and the wicked and the judge of all the cases.

Let us forestall God therefore with the confession of sin and before the judgement let us purify the soul from all its errors. It is a serious risk not to take every care in correcting ourselves from sin; and we must do penance when we understand that above all we will be called to give an account of the motivations of all our failings.

Recognize, most beloved, how great is the love of God for us in wanting us to repair our faults before the judgement; for this in fact the just judge admonishes before exercising severity. For this, dearly

beloved, our God demands rivers of tears from us, so that through penance we can repair that which we had lost through negligence. God knows that man is not always persevering in good: he frequently sins in action or makes a mistake in speaking; therefore he has taught us the way of penance, with which to rebuild that which has been destroyed and to repair the errors. Therefore man, in order to be sure of forgiveness, must always wail over his faults. Yet, since the human condition is so sick because of its many wounds, let no one despair, because the Lord is so liberal that he loves to lavish the gifts of his mercy on all the needy.

But perhaps someone will say: why should I fear, I who do not do anything wicked? Listen to what the apostle John says with regard to this: "If we say that we are without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us" (1 Jn. 1: 8). Let no one therefore seduce you, dearly beloved: the worst sin is to not recognize your own sins. He who recognizes his faults can reconcile himself with God through penance; while no sinner is more worthy of being pitied than the one who retains that he has nothing for which to repent. Therefore I exhort you with the words of Scripture: "Humble yourselves under the powerful hand of God" (1 Pet. 5: 6). And since no one is without sin, let there be no one among you who does not do penance: if someone in fact presumes to be innocent, he is guilty exactly because of this. There is the one who has the lighter fault, but no one is impeccable; certainly there is the difference between the one and the other, but no one is immune from fault. Therefore, dearest, let the one who has offended God more seriously ask forgiveness with greater trust; let the one then who has not stained himself with serious sins, pray not to fall into them, through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen.

Responsorial *Act. 17: 30-31; 14: 16*

R: In the past God overlooked such ignorance, * but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, for he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice.

V: He, in the past generations, has left every nation to follow its own path;
R: but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, for he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice.

YEAR B

Gospel Mk. 1: 14 – 20

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the Gospel"

And passing along by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men." And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zeb'edee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. And immediately he called them; and they left their father Zeb'edee in the boat with the hired servants, and followed him.

Third Reading *Tratt. 2: 3 – 7; 4: 1 – 3*

Convert and I will save you.

From the “Catholic Works” of Tertullian, presbyter.

After such serious faults of the human pride, begun with the rebellion of Adam, after the punishment inflicted on man and on his heredity of sin, after the casting out from paradise and the subjection to death. God matured in himself, so to say, almost a return of mercy, and he derived it as a sort of regret, that lead him to annul the sentence of the primitive indignation, with the promise to forgive the creature made in his image.

He then formed a people and he filled them with the ineffable gifts of his love; but having had to observe so many times the obstinate ungratefulness, he did not cease to exhort them to penance through the mouth of all the prophets. And in promising his grace, with which in the last times he would illuminate the entire world in the light of his Spirit, he wanted this to be preceded by the

baptismal immersion, so that such a sign of penance could dispose beforehand the souls of all those whom he would have called, in grace, to the promises already made to the descendants of Abraham.

John did not keep quiet: “Convert” he exclaimed (Mt. 3: 2). Already in fact salvation was drawing near for the people; the Lord would bring it according to the promise of God. He therefore caused it to be preceded by the penance that would purify the souls sweeping away, cancelling and removing from the heart of man every pollution of the first sin and every stain caused by ignorance, preparing in this way for the coming of the Holy Spirit a pure dwelling, in which he could make his dwelling with his heavenly gifts. Of these goods only one is the reason: the salvation of man, after having cancelled the sins of the past; this is the reason of penance, this is its task, that facilitating the plan of divine mercy, it could be of use to man and be pleasing to God.

He who established justice and the punishment for all the faults of the flesh or of the spirit, of the work or of the intentions, also promised the forgiveness through penance, saying to the people: repent and I will save you. And again: “As it is true that I live – oracle of the Lord God – I do not take pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked desists from his conduct and lives” (Ez. 33: 11).

Penance therefore is life that is offered to you in the place of death. And you, sinner like me, in fact less than me – I in fact know that I am a greater sinner than you – go on embrace it, attach yourself to her, with the impetus and the faith with which a ship wrecked person clings to a plank! It will lift you up when you are submerged by the waves of sin and will lead you to the door of divine clemency. Seize the occasion of an un-hoped for fortune, because you, who in front of the Lord were nothing, a drop in a bucket, dust of the square, potter’s clay, can become a tree, that “tree planted along the flowing streams” whose leaves are always green, “which gives fruit in its time” (Ps. 1: 3) and does not know either fire or axe.

Responsorial *Est. 4: 17h; Jdt. 9: 18 (Vulg.)*

R: Grant us, Lord, the time of penance * and do not close the mouth of those who praise you.

V: Remember your covenant and inspire the words of my lips,
R: and do not close the mouth of those who praise you.

YEAR C

Gospel *Lk. 1: 1 – 4; 4: 14 – 21*

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things which have been accomplished among us, just as they were delivered to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word, it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theoph'ilus, that you may know the truth concerning the things of which you have been informed.

And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and a report concerning him went out through all the surrounding country. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified by all. 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; and there was given to him the book of the prophet Isaiah. He opened the book and found the place where it was written, "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, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." 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**. And he began to say to them, "**Today** this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

Third Reading *Hom. 32: 2 – 6*

Today in this gathering the Lord speaks.

From the “Homilies on Luke” of Origen, presbyter.

“Jesus returned to Galilee with the power of the Holy Spirit and his fame spread in the entire region. He taught in their synagogues and every one praised him” (Lk. 4: 14-15). When you read that he taught in their synagogues and that everyone praised him, do not judge only them as

fortunate, and do not believe yourself to be deprived of his teaching. If the Scriptures are true, the Lord did not speak only then in the gatherings of the Jews, but he speaks also now in this our gathering; and not only in this, but also in the other gatherings and in the whole world Jesus teaches, **searching for instruments through whom to teach.**

“He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue as was his custom. And he stood up to read. The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it he found the place where it is written: The Spirit of the Lord is on me; therefore he has anointed me” (Lk. 4: 16-18).

It is not by chance that unrolling the scroll he found the chapter that spoke prophetically of him, but this was predisposed by God. As in fact it is written: A sparrow does not fall to the ground without the will of your Father (cfr. Mt. 10: 29) and: “Also the hairs of your head are numbered” (Lk. 12: 7); so it happened that he was offered exactly the scroll of Isaiah; and not another part, but that which spoke of the mystery of Christ: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me; therefore he has anointed me” (Is. 61: 1).

After having read this passage Jesus “rolled up the volume, handed it over to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him” (Lk. 4: 20). And now, if you want, in this assembly your eyes can perceive the Saviour. When you will have turned all the attention of your heart to contemplate the wisdom and the truth of the Only begotten Son of God, your eyes will see Jesus. **Blessed that assembly of which the Scripture speaks, in which the eyes of all are fixed on him.** How I would want that also this gathering could say the same thing, that is that the eyes of all, of the catechumens, of the faithful, of the women, of the men and of the children, not the eyes of the body, but that of the soul, see Jesus! If you were to look at him, from his light and from his gaze your faces would be rendered more splendid and you would be able to say: “Let the light of your face shine on us, Lord” (Ps. 4: 7). To him be glory and honour forever and ever.

Responsorial *Jl. 1: 14; Mk. 1: 15*

R: Proclaim a fast, * convoke an assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the region in the house of the Lord your God, and cry to the

Lord.

V: The time has come and the kingdom of God is near.

R: convoke an assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the region in the house of the Lord your God, and cry to the Lord.

MONDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading *Rm. 8:18-39*

The certainty of the future glory.

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

What then shall we say to this? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies; who is to condemn? Is it

Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us?

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Responsorial *Rm. 8: 26; Zec. 12: 9, 10*

R: Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness, because we do not even know what it is suitable to ask for. * The Spirit intercedes for us with insistence, with sighs too deep for words.

V: In that day, says the Lord, I will pour out over the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and of prayer.

R: The Spirit intercedes for us with insistence, with sighs too deep for words.

Second Reading *Rm. 15: 2*

It is exactly the suffering that has saved the world.

From “the Letter to the Romans” of St. John Chrysostom, bishop.

“Moreover whom He did predestine, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified.” Now He justified them by the bath of regeneration. “And whom He justified, them He also glorified” (Rm. 8: 30) by the gift, by the adoption. As if he should say, Let me then hear no more about the dangers and the malicious devices from every quarter. For even if some disbelieve the things to come, still they have not a word to say against the good things that have already taken place; as, for instance, the friendship of God towards you from the first, the justifying, the glory.

And yet these things He gave you by means that seemed to be distressing. And those things that you thought to be disgracing, the Cross, scourges, bonds, these are what have set the whole world

aright. As then by what He Himself suffered, though of aspect forbidding in man's eye, even by these He effected the liberty and salvation of the whole race; so also is He wont to do in regard to those things that you endure, turning your sufferings unto glory and renown for you. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rm. 8: 31) Why, it may be said, who is there that is not against us? Why the world is against us, both kings and peoples, both relations and countrymen. Yet these who are against us, so far are they from thwarting us at all, that even without their will they become to us the causes of crowns, and procurers of countless blessings, in that God's wisdom turns their plots into our salvation and glory.

See how really no one is against us! For it was this which gave new lustre to Job, the fact that the devil was in arms against him. For the devil moved at once friends, his wife and servants against him, inflicted him with wounds, and moved a thousand other machinations against him. And it turned out that none of them was against him on the whole. And yet this was no great thing to him, though it was great in itself, but that which is a far greater thing is, that it turned out that they were all for him. For since God was for him, even things seemingly against him all became for him.

And this happened with the Apostles also, inasmuch as both the Jews, and the Gentiles, and false brethren, and rulers, and peoples, and famines, and poverty, and ten thousand things were against them; and yet nothing was against them. For the things which made them the most bright and conspicuous, and great in the sight both of God and of men, were these. This is why he says, "If God is for us, who can be against us?"

Next, not being satisfied with what he had already said, the greatest sign of His love for us, and that which he always is dwelling over, that he sets down here also; I mean, the slaying of His Son. For He did not only justify us –he says- and glorify us, and make us conformed to that Image, but not even did he spare His Son for you. And therefore he proceeds to say, "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rm. 8: 32). How then is He to neglect us, in whose behalf "He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all? For reflect what goodness it is not to spare even His own Son, but to give Him up, and to give Him up for all, and that too for the worthless, and unfeeling, and enemies, and blasphemers. "How

then shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? What he means then is much as follows; If He gave His own Son, and not merely gave Him, but gave Him to death, why doubt any more about the rest, since you have the Master? Why be dubious about the chattels, when you have the Lord? For He that gave the greater thing to His enemies, how shall He do anything else but give the lesser things to His friends?

Responsorial *Rm. 8: 36-37; Ps. 43: 18*

R: For you, Lord, we are put to death every day: we are treated like sheep for the slaughter. * But in all these things we are more than victors by virtue of him who has loved us.

V: All this has happened to us and we had not forgotten you.

R: But in all these things we are more than victors by virtue of him who has loved us.

CYCLE 2

First Reading *Gen. 19:1-17, 23-29*

The destruction of Sodom.

The two angels came to Sodom in the evening; and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw them, he rose to meet them, and bowed himself with his face to the earth, and said, "My lords, turn aside, I pray you, to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise up early and go on your way." They said, "No; we will spend the night in the street."

But he urged them strongly; so they turned aside to him and entered his house; and he made them a feast, and baked unleavened bread, and they ate.

But before they lay down, the men of the city, the men of Sodom, both young and old, all the people to the last man, surrounded the house; and they called to Lot, "Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us, that we may know them."

Lot went out of the door to the men, shut the door after him, and said, "I beg you, my brothers, do not act so wickedly. Behold, I have two daughters who have not known man; let me bring them out to

you, and do to them as you please; only do nothing to these men, for they have come under the shelter of my roof."

But they said, "Stand back!" And they said, "This fellow came to sojourn, and he would play the judge! Now we will deal worse with you than with them." Then they pressed hard against the man Lot, and drew near to break the door.

But the men put forth their hands and brought Lot into the house to them, and shut the door. And they struck with blindness the men who were at the door of the house, both small and great, so that they wearied themselves groping for the door.

Then the men said to Lot, "Have you any one else here? Sons-in-law, sons, daughters, or any one you have in the city, bring them out of the place; for we are about to destroy this place, because the outcry against its people has become great before the LORD, and the LORD has sent us to destroy it." So Lot went out and said to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, "Up, get out of this place; for the LORD is about to destroy the city." But he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting.

When morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, "Arise, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be consumed in the punishment of the city." But he lingered; so the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the LORD being merciful to him, and they brought him forth and set him outside the city.

And when they had brought them forth, they said, "Flee for your life; do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley; flee to the hills, lest you be consumed."

The sun had risen on the earth when Lot came to Zo'ar. Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomor'rah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and the entire valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. But Lot's wife behind him looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

And Abraham went early in the morning to the place where he had stood before the LORD; and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomor'rah and toward all the land of the valley, and beheld, and lo, the smoke of the land went up like the smoke of a furnace.

So it was that, when God destroyed the cities of the valley, God remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of the midst of the overthrow, when he overthrew the cities in which Lot dwelt.

Responsorial *Lk. 17: 28, 29; 2 Pet. 2: 6*

R: It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting and building. * In the day on which Lot left Sodom, fire and sulphur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.

V: God condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction reducing them to ashes, placing them as an example to all those who would have lived wickedly.

R: In the day on which Lot left Sodom, fire and sulphur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all.

Second Reading *Nm. 21: 1 – 22:5; 23: 1 – 2*

Let us not go against the will of God.

From the “Letter to the Corinthians” of St. Clement I, pope and martyr.

Take heed, beloved, lest His many kindnesses lead to the condemnation of us all. For thus it must be unless we walk worthy of Him, and with one mind do those things that are good and well pleasing in His sight. For the Scripture says in a certain place, “The Spirit of the Lord is a candle searching the secret parts of the heart.” (cfr. Pr. 20: 27).

Let us reflect how near He is, and that none of the thoughts or reasoning in which we engage ourselves are hidden from Him. It is right, therefore, that we should not leave the post that His will has assigned us. Let us rather offend those men who are foolish, and inconsiderate, and lifted up, and who glory in the pride of their speech, than offend God.

Let us reverence the Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood was given for us; let us esteem those who rule over us; let us honour the aged among us; let us train up the young men in the fear of God; let us direct our wives to that which is good. Let them exhibit the lovely habit of purity in all their conduct; let them show forth the sincere disposition of meekness; let them make manifest the command

which they have of their tongue, by their manner of speaking; let them display their love, not by preferring one to another, but by showing equal affection to all those who piously fear God. Let your children be partakers of true Christian training; let them learn of how great avail humility is with God — how much the spirit of pure affection can prevail with Him — how excellent and great His fear is, and how it saves all those who walk in it with a pure mind. For He is a Searcher of the thoughts and desires of the heart: His breath is in us; and when He pleases, He will take it away. All this is confirmed by the faith that we have in Christ. He in fact through the Holy Spirit spurs us in this way: "Come, children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord. Is there someone who desires life and who desires long life in order to taste good? Preserve the tongue from evil, the lips from lying words. Keep far away from evil and do good, search for peace and follow it" (Ps. 33: 12-15). Compassionate and generous towards everyone, he is the Father who shows his special love to those who fear him. With sweetness and goodness he extends his graces on those who draw near to him with simple hearts. Therefore do not have your heart divided, and let your soul not become proud because of his incomparable and magnificent gifts.

Responsorial *Cfr. Tob. 4: 19; 14: 8*

R: In every circumstance bless the Lord and ask that he may be the guide of your ways; * and your desires will have a good ending.

V: Do what is pleasing to him, in truth and with all your strength:

R: and your desires will have a good ending.

Gospel *Mk. 3:22-30*

And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Be-el'zebul, and by the prince of demons he casts out the demons." And he called them to him, and said to them in parables, "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end. But no one can enter a strong man's house and

plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man; then indeed he may plunder his house.

"Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin" -- for they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."

TUESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading *Rm. 9:1-18*

God uses mercy with whom He wants and He hardens the heart of whomever He wants.

I am speaking the truth in Christ, I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen by race. They are Israelites, and to them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ. God who is over all be blessed forever. Amen.

But it is not as though the word of God had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel belong to Israel, and not all are children of Abraham because they are his descendants; but "Through Isaac shall your descendants be named." This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are reckoned as descendants.

For this is what the promise said, "About this time I will return and Sarah shall have a son." And not only so, but also when Rebecca had conceived children by one man, our forefather Isaac, though they were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad, in order that God's purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of his call, she was told, "The elder will serve the younger." As it is written, "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."

What shall we say then? Is there injustice on God's part? By no means! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."

So it depends not upon man's will or exertion, but upon God's mercy. For the scripture says to Pharaoh, "I have raised you up for the very purpose of showing my power in you, so that my name may

be proclaimed in all the earth." So then he has mercy upon whomever he wills, and he hardens the heart of whomever he wills.

Responsorial *RM. 9: 4, 8, 6*

R: The Israelites possess the adoption as sons, the glory, the covenants, the legislations, the cult, the promises; * But only the sons of the promise are considered as descendants.

V: In fact not all the descendants of Israel are Israel.

R: But only the sons of the promise are considered as descendants.

Second Reading *Book 10*

Those who live a heavenly life are pilgrims and foreigners on earth.

From the "Commentary on the Gospel of St. John" of St. Cyril of Alexandria, bishop.

It is written in the book of Moses that Abraham believed in God and the faith was credited to him as justice and he was called the friend of God. Which was his faith and why was he called the friend of God? It was said to him: Get out of your land, from your country and from the house of your father, towards the land that I will show you" (Gen. 12: 1). And even when he was commanded to immolate his first-born son as a figure of Christ, the secret design of God was revealed to him. And for this the Saviour, speaking of him to the Jews, said: "Abraham, your father, exulted in the hope of seeing my day; he saw it and rejoiced" (Jn. 8: 56).

Therefore because of this obedience and because of his sacrifice, Abraham was called the friend of God and was girded with the glory of justice: not only, but he was also honoured with the privilege of speaking with God, and knew the plan of God which would be realized in the fullness of the ages.

And it is exactly in the fullness of the ages, Christ, truly holy host who takes away the sins of the world, died for us. But pay attention and observe how the same is verified also in those who are called to a more intimate friendship with our Saviour Jesus Christ. To them also it is said: "Come out of your land". Listen with what courage they answer: "For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come" (Heb. 13: 14) whose artifice and architect is God. Those who live a heavenly life are in fact pilgrims

and foreigners on earth and, all of them caught by the love of God, detach themselves from the earth because of the desire of heaven, the dwelling to which the Saviour makes mention when he says: “I go to prepare a place for you; I will return and I will take you with me, so that where I am you also may be” (Jn. 14: 2, 3). They have understood that they have to leave their house.

How is it possible? Christ himself tells us: “he who loves his father or his mother more than me, is not worthy of me” (Mt. 10: 37). There is no doubt that the friendship of God is above every other friendship or most intimate relationship and, for those who love him, the love of Christ is stronger than any other love. Abraham was commanded to offer to God his son in holocaust: they instead, girded with faith and justice are commanded to offer not others but themselves. “I exhort you” – he says – “to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God; and this is your spiritual cult” (Rm. 12: 1). Of them it is also written: “Now those who are in Christ Jesus have crucified their flesh with its passions and its desires” (Gal. 5: 24).

They also have penetrated into the mystery of Christ (cfr. Col. 2: 2). They have in fact the certainty that, in exchange of the love towards Christ, they will be given as a reward the beatitude of the future life and the eternal glory. And thus, like Abraham, they will be called righteous and sons of God.

Responsorial *2 Cor. 5: 7 – 9; Heb. 13: 14*

R: We walk in faith and not yet in vision. We are full of trust and we prefer to go into exile from the body and to dwell with the Lord. * Therefore we make it our goal to please him, whether we are in the body or away from it.

V: For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.

R: Therefore we make it our goal to please him, whether we are in the body or away from it.

CYCLE 2

First Reading *Gen. 21:1-21*

The birth of Isaac.

The LORD visited Sarah as he had said, and the LORD did to Sarah as he had promised. And Sarah conceived, and bore Abraham a son in his old age at the time of which God had spoken to him. Abraham called the name of his son who was born to him, whom Sarah bore him, Isaac. And Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. And Sarah said, "God has made laughter for me; every one who hears will laugh over me." And she said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would suckle children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."

And the child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not be heir with my son Isaac."

And the thing was very displeasing to Abraham on account of his son. But God said to Abraham, "Be not displeased because of the lad and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for through Isaac shall your descendants be named. And I will make a nation of the son of the slave woman also, because he is your offspring."

So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered in the wilderness of Beer-sheba.

When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. Then she went, and sat down over against him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, "Let me not look upon the death of the child." And as she sat over against him, the child lifted up his voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the lad; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not; for God has heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad, and hold him fast with your hand; for I will make him a great nation." Then God opened her eyes, and she saw a well of water; and she went, and

filled the skin with water, and gave the lad a drink. And God was with the lad, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother took a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

Responsorial *Rm. 9: 7, 8; Gal. 4: 30*

R: Not because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children; but "through Isaac shall your offspring come". * it is not the children of the flesh who are considered as the children of God, but only the children of the promise.

V: Get rid of the slave woman and her son, for the slave woman's son will never share in the inheritance with the free woman's son.

R: It is not the children of the flesh who are considered as the children of God, but only the children of the promise.

Second Reading *Nm. 24:1 – 5; 27: 1 – 29:1*

God is faithful to His promises.

From the "Letter to the Corinthians" of St. Clement I, pope and martyr.

Let us consider, beloved, how the Lord continually proves to us that there shall be a future resurrection, of which He has rendered the Lord Jesus Christ the first fruits by raising Him from the dead.

Let us contemplate, beloved, the resurrection that is at all times taking place. Day and night declare to us a resurrection. The night sinks to sleep, and the day arises; the day again departs, and the night comes on.

Let us behold the fruits of the earth, how the sowing of grain takes place. The sower goes forth, and casts it into the ground; and the seed being thus scattered, though dry and naked when it fell upon the earth, is gradually dissolved. Then out of its dissolution the mighty power of the providence of the Lord raises it up again, and from one seed many arise and bring forth fruit.

Having then this hope, let our souls be bound to Him who is faithful in His promises, and just in His judgments. He who has commanded us not to lie, shall much more Himself not lie; for nothing is impossible with God, except to lie. Let His faith therefore

be stirred up again within us, and let us consider that all things are nigh unto Him.

By the word of His might He established all things, and by His word He can overthrow them. "Who shall say unto Him, What have you done? or, Who shall resist the power of His strength?" (Cfr. Wis. 12: 12). When and as He pleases He will do all things, and none of the things determined by Him shall pass away. All things are open before Him, and nothing can be hidden from His will. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handy-work. Day unto day utters speech, and night unto night shows knowledge. And there are no words or speeches of which the voices are not heard." (Ps. 18: 1-3).

Since then all things are seen and heard by God, let us fear Him, and forsake those wicked works that proceed from evil desires; so that, through His mercy, we may be protected from the judgments to come. For whither can any of us flee from His mighty hand? Or what world will receive any of those who run away from Him? For the Scripture says in a certain place, "Whither shall I go, and where shall I hide from your presence? If I ascend into heaven, you are there; if I go away even to the uttermost parts of the earth, there is your right hand; if I make my bed in the abyss, there is your Spirit." (Cfr. Ps. 138: 7- 10).

Whither, then, shall any one go, or where shall he escape from Him who comprehends all things?

Let us then draw near to Him with holiness of spirit, lifting up pure and undefiled hands unto Him, loving our gracious and merciful Father, who has made us partakers in the blessings of His elect.

Responsorial *Cfr. Est. 4: 17b-c*

R: Lord, sovereign of the universe, all things are placed under your power and no one can oppose your will; * save us, for the love of your name.

V: You have made the heaven and the earth and all the wonders of the universe:

R: save us, for the love of your name.

Gospel *Mk. 3:31-35*

And his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside they sent to him and called him. And a crowd was sitting about him; and they said to him, "Your mother and your brothers are outside, asking for you." And he replied, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking around on those who sat about him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother."

WEDNESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading *Rm. 9:19-33*

The free omnipotence of the Creator.

You will say to me then, "Why does he still find fault? For who can resist his will?" But who are you, a man, to answer back to God? Will what is moulded say to its moulder, "Why have you made me thus?" Has the potter no right over the clay, to make out of the same lump one vessel for beauty and another for menial use? What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience the vessels of wrath made for destruction, in order to make known the riches of his glory for the vessels of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? As indeed he says in Hose'a, "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'my beloved.'" "And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' they will be called 'sons of the living God.'"

And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel: "Though the number of the sons of Israel be as the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved; for the Lord will execute his sentence upon the earth with rigor and dispatch."

And as Isaiah predicted, "If the Lord of hosts had not left us children, we would have fared like Sodom and been made like Gomor'rah."

What shall we say, then? That Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained it, that is, righteousness through faith; but that Israel who pursued the righteousness which is based on law did not succeed in fulfilling that law. Why? Because they did not pursue it through faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, as it is written, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone that will make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall; and he who believes in him will not be put to shame."

Responsorial *Hos. 2: 25; Rm. 9: 23, 25*

R: I will love Unloved, says the Lord; * to No-people-of-mine I will say: My People and he will say: My God!

V: God has called us to make us know the richness of his glory as he says in Hosea:

R: To No-people-of-mine I will say: My People, and he will say: My God!

Second Reading *Book 1: 27 – 28*

The only descendant of Abraham: Christ and the Church.

From the Commentary on the Letter to the Galatians” of St. Augustine, bishop.

“The law”, says the Apostle, “is for us like the pedagogue that has lead us to Christ” (Gal. 3: 24). First “we were enclosed under the custody of the law. But as soon as faith arrived, we are not anymore under a **pedagogue**” (Gal. 3: 23, 25). He corrects in this way those who make the grace of Christ vain and, as if he who was to have called us to freedom had as yet not come, they want to remain still under the pedagogue.

When he says that all through faith are sons of God, since whoever is baptised has clothed himself with Christ, he wants to demonstrate that the Gentiles, even if they have not been under the subjection of the pedagogue, should not despair thinking that they cannot consider themselves as children. Clothed with Christ through faith, all become sons, not by nature, like the Only begotten who is also the Wisdom of God, and neither by singular usurpation of the person of Wisdom and of his operations. One with Wisdom is the same mediator, Christ, assumed from it in his humanity without any interposition or intervention of another mediator. They instead become sons through the participation of Wisdom, in the strength and through the effect of the faith in the mediator.

In such a faith there is no difference between Jews and Greeks, between slaves and free men, between men and women, since all those who have faith are one in Christ Jesus. And if faith, with which one lives according to justice in this life, works this, how much more fully and perfectly will the vision itself do it, when we will see him face to face?

Now in fact, though having through the justification of the faith the first fruits of the Spirit who is life, yet, because of sin the body is

still subject to death, these differences between Jews and Gentiles, and of social conditions and of sex, though being cancelled by the unity of the faith, still remain in the earthly existence. Even the apostles teach us that in the course of this life it is opportune to conserve such distinctions; they give us in fact most valid norms in order to live together though maintaining the differences due to the nationality, to the condition between slaves and masters, to the sex, and to others that eventually can present themselves. Even before them, the Lord himself had said: "Render therefore to Caesar that which is of Caesar and to God that which is of God" (Mt. 22: 21).

"All of you" – said the Apostle – "are one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3: 28); but taking account exactly of these differences he adds: "And if you belong to Christ" it follows therefore that "you are Abraham's descendants" (Gal. 3: 29). The sense is this: All of you are one in Christ, you therefore are Abraham's descendants. Before in fact he had said that the Scripture "does not say to your descendants" as if it was dealing with many, but "to your descendant" as to only one, that is Christ" (Gal 3: 16). Here therefore he demonstrates that Christ is the unique descendant not referring only to him, unique mediator, but also to the Church his body, of which he is the head. And this because all are only one in Christ and receive, according to the promise, the inheritance through faith. In expectation of his coming, the people were enclosed in the law as under the custody of a pedagogue, until the opportune age: until when, that is, those who in the same people were called according to the plan of God would be called, that is those who in that field were found to be grain.

Responsorial *Gal. 3: 26-27; 1 Cor. 6: 15*

R: All of you are sons of God through the faith in Jesus Christ, * since all of you who were united with Christ in baptism have been clothed with Christ.

V: Your bodies are members of Christ.

R: since all of you who were united with Christ in baptism have been clothed with Christ.

CYCLE 2

First Reading *Gen. 22:1-19*

Isaac is offered in Holocaust.

After these things God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." He said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Mori'ah, and offer him there as a burnt offering upon one of the mountains of which I shall tell you." So Abraham rose early in the morning, saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and his son Isaac; and he cut the wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him.

On the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw the place afar off. Then Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the ass; I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you." And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it on Isaac his son; and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. So they went both of them together.

And Isaac said to his father Abraham, "My father!" And he said, "Here am I, my son." He said, "Behold, the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?" Abraham said, "God will provide himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So they went both of them together. When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar, upon the wood. Then Abraham put forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

But the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here am I." He said, "Do not lay your hand on the lad or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, seeing you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me." And Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him was a ram, caught in a thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son.

So Abraham called the name of that place The LORD will provide; as it is said to this day, "On the mount of the LORD it shall

be provided." And the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, "By myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will indeed bless you, and I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore. And your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies, and by your descendants shall all the nations of the earth bless themselves, because you have obeyed my voice."

So Abraham returned to his young men, and they arose and went together to Beer-sheba; and Abraham dwelt at Beer-sheba.

Responsorial *Heb. 11: 17, 19; Rm. 4: 17*

R: Through faith Abraham, put to the test, offered Isaac, and he who had received the promises, offered his unique son. * He thought in fact that God was capable of making him rise from the dead.

V: He believed in him who gives life to the dead and calls to existence the things that do not as yet exist.

R: He thought in fact that God was capable of making him rise from the dead.

Second Reading *Nm. 30 – 32*

Let us search for our praise in God and not from ourselves.

From the “Letter to the Corinthians” of St. Clement I, pope and martyr.

Seeing, therefore, that we are the portion of the Holy One, let us do all those things which pertain to holiness, avoiding all evil-speaking, all abominable and impure embraces, together with all drunkenness, seeking after change, all abominable lusts, detestable adultery, and execrable pride. “For God,” says the Scripture, “resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” (1 Pet. 5: 5).

Let us cleave, then, to those to whom grace has been given by God. Let us clothe ourselves with concord and humility, ever exercising self-control, standing far off from all whispering and evil-speaking, being justified by our works, and not our words. For the Scripture says, “He that speaks much, shall also hear much in answer. And does he that is ready in speech deem himself

righteous? (Jb. 11: 2). Blessed is he that is born of woman, who lives but a short time: (Jb. 14: 1) he will not be given to speaking much." Let our praise be in God, and not of ourselves; for God hates those that commend themselves (cfr. 2 Cor. 10: 17-18). Let testimony to our good deeds be borne by others, as it was in the case of our righteous forefathers. Boldness, and arrogance, and audacity belong to those that are accursed of God; but moderation, humility, and meekness to such as are blessed by Him.

Let us cleave then to His blessing, and consider what are the means of possessing it. Let us think over the things that have taken place from the beginning. For what reason was our father Abraham blessed? Was it not because he wrought righteousness and truth through faith? Isaac, with perfect confidence, as if knowing what was to happen, cheerfully yielded himself as a sacrifice. Jacob, through reason of his brother, went forth with humility from his own land, and came to Laban and served him; and there was given to him the sceptre of the twelve tribes of Israel. Whosoever will candidly consider each particular, will recognize the greatness of the gifts that were given by him. For from him have sprung the priests and all the Levites who minister at the altar of God. From him also was descended our Lord Jesus Christ according to the flesh. From him arose kings, princes, and rulers of the race of Judah. Nor are his other tribes in small glory, inasmuch as God had promised, "Your seed shall be as the stars of heaven." (Gen. 22: 17)

All these, therefore, were highly honoured, and made great, not for their own sake, or for their own works, or for the righteousness which they wrought, but through the operation of His will. And we, too, being called by His will in Christ Jesus, are not justified by ourselves, nor by our own wisdom, or understanding, or godliness, or works which we have wrought in holiness of heart; but by that faith through which, from the beginning, Almighty God has justified all men; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Responsorial *Deut. 7: 9; Rm. 8: 28*

R: The Lord God is the strong and faithful God, who maintains his covenant and benevolence with those who love him * and who observe his

commandments.

V: Everything concurs to the good of those who love God

R: and who observe his commandments.

Gospel Mk. 4:1-20

Again he began to teach beside the sea. And a very large crowd gathered about him, so that he got into a boat and sat in it on the sea; and the whole crowd was beside the sea on the land.

And he taught them many things in parables, and in his teaching he said to them: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured it. Other seed fell on rocky ground, where it had not much soil, and immediately it sprang up, since it had no depth of soil; and when the sun rose it was scorched, and since it had no root it withered away. Other seed fell among thorns and the thorns grew up and choked it, and it yielded no grain. And other seeds fell into good soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing and yielding thirty fold and sixty fold and a hundredfold." And he said, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

And when he was alone, those who were about him with the twelve asked him concerning the parables. And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables; so that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand; lest they should turn again, and be forgiven."

And he said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables? The sower sows the word. And these are the ones along the path, where the word is sown; when they hear, Satan immediately comes and takes away the word that is sown in them. And these in like manner are the ones sown upon rocky ground, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy; and they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away. And others are the ones **sown among thorns**; they are those who **hear the word, but the cares of the world, and the delight in riches, and the desire for other things, enter in and choke the word, and it proves unfruitful**. But those that were sown upon the good soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty fold and sixty fold and a hundredfold."

THURSDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading *Rm. 10: 1-21*

God is the Lord of all.

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. I bear them witness that **they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened**. For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness. For **Christ is the end of the law, that every one who has faith may be justified**.

Moses writes that **the man who practices the righteousness which is based on the law shall live by it**. But the righteousness based on faith says, Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ down) or "Who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

But what does it say? The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart (that is, the word of faith which we preach); because, if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved. The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." For there is **no distinction between Jew and Greek**; the same Lord is Lord of all and bestows his riches upon all who call upon him. For, "every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved."

But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? And how can men preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach good news!"

But they have not all obeyed the gospel; for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?" So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ. But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have; for "Their voice

has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world."

Again I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, "I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry." Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me." But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."

Responsorial *Rm. 10: 12-13; 15: 8-9*

R: Christ himself is the Lord of all, rich towards all those who invoke him;
* in fact whoever invokes the name of the Lord will be saved.

V: I say that Christ has made himself the servant of the circumcised in order to fulfil the promises made to the fathers; the pagans instead glorify God for his mercy.

R: In fact whoever invokes the name of the Lord will be saved.

Second Reading *Let. 29: 6 – 9*

We preach Christ.

From the “Letters” of St. Ambrose, bishop.

How beautiful are the feet of those who bring a happy news of good; who announce peace! (cfr. Is.52:7; Rm.10:1,5). Who are those who bring the good news if not Peter, if not Paul and all the apostles? What do they announce to us if not the Lord Jesus? He is our peace, he is our highest good: because he is good and proceeds from the good Father. From a good tree in fact good fruit are gathered. Good finally is his Spirit, that those who are faithful to God receive from him in order to lead them along the right way.

Who, possessing the Spirit of God, could say that he is not good, when he himself says: “Why are you envious because I am good?” (Mt. 20: 15). Let this good come into our soul, into the depths of our minds, because God gives generously to those who ask. He is our treasure, our way, wisdom and our justice. He is our shepherd, in fact the good shepherd. He is our life. Do you see how many goods are amounted in only one? All this the evangelists announce to us.

Jesus Christ himself is therefore the highest good announced by the prophets, preached by the angels, promised by the Father, evangelised by the apostles. He comes to us as the fullness of maturity, precisely like the harvest that matures on the mountains, and first of all he brings us a happy news of good, so that nothing unripe, nothing immature may be in our intentions, nothing violent or sour in our acts and in our works. For which he also says: I who spoke to you, here I am (cfr. Is. 52: 6). That is, here I am, the one who spoke in the prophets, in your flesh assumed from the Virgin: I am here the mysterious image of God, sign of his essence; and here I am as man.

Let us go therefore to him who is the highest good: he is goodness; he is the patience of Israel, who invites you to penance so that you may not be called to judgement, but may receive instead the remission of sins. "Do penance" (Mt. 4: 17) he says. He is the highest good which does not need anything and is rich with everything. He is so rich that "all of us have received from his fullness" (Jn. 1: 16) and in him we are filled, as the evangelist says.

Responsorial *1 Jn. 5: 20, 11*

R: We know that the Son of God has come and he has given us the intelligence to know the true God. And we are in his true Son. * He is the true God and eternal life.

V: God has given us eternal life and this life is in his Son.

R: He is the true God and eternal life

CYCLE 2

First Reading *Gen. 24:1-27*

Abraham sends his servant to search for a wife for Isaac.

Now Abraham was old, well advanced in years; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his house, who had charge of all that he had, "Put your hand under my thigh, and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and of the earth, that you will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the

Canaanites, among whom I dwell, but will go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac."

The servant said to him, "Perhaps the woman may not be willing to follow me to this land; must I then take your son back to the land from which you came?" Abraham said to him, "See to it that you do not take my son back there."

The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and swore to me, 'To your descendants I will give this land,' he will send his angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there. But if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be free from this oath of mine; only you must not take my son back there."

So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter. Then the servant took ten of his master's camels and departed, taking all sorts of choice gifts from his master; and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor. And he made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at the time of evening, the time when women go out to draw water. And he said, "O LORD, God of my master Abraham, grant me success today, I pray you, and show steadfast love to my master Abraham. Behold, I am standing by the spring of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. Let the maiden to whom I shall say, 'Pray let down your jar that I may drink,' and who shall say, 'Drink, and I will water your camels' -- let her be the one whom you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I shall know that you have shown steadfast love to my master."

Before he had done speaking, behold, Rebecca, who was born to Bethu'el the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her water jar upon her shoulder. The maiden was very fair to look upon, a virgin, whom no man had known. She went down to the spring, and filled her jar, and came up.

Then the servant ran to meet her, and said, "Pray give me a little water to drink from your jar." She said, "Drink, my lord"; and she quickly let down her jar upon her hand, and gave him a drink. When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw for your camels also, until they have done drinking." So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough and ran again to the well to draw, and she drew for all his camels. The man gazed at her in silence to learn whether the LORD had prospered his journey or not.

When the camels had done drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing a half shekel, and two bracelets for her arms weighing ten gold shekels, and said, "Tell me whose daughter you are. Is there room in your father's house for us to lodge in?" She said to him, "I am the daughter of Bethu'el the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor." She added, "We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in."

The man bowed his head and worshiped the LORD, and said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken his steadfast love and his faithfulness toward my master. As for me, the LORD has led me in the way to the house of my master's kinsmen."

Responsorial *Cfr. Sir. 44: 22, 23; Heb. 11: 20*

R: God handed over the promise to Isaac and made him place the blessing of all men and the covenant on the head of Jacob; * he confirmed him in his blessings and gave him the country in inheritance.

V: Through faith Isaac blessed Jacob, also with regard to future things,

R: he confirmed him in his blessings and gave him the country in inheritance.

Second Reading *Nm. 33 – 34*

May our glory and our faith be in God.

From the “Letter to the Corinthians” of St. Clement I, pope and martyr

What shall we do, then, brethren? Shall we become slothful in well doing, and cease from the practice of love? God forbid that we should follow any such course! But rather let us hasten with all energy and readiness of mind to perform every good work. For the Creator and Lord of all Himself rejoices in His works. For by His infinitely great power He established the heavens, and by His incomprehensible wisdom He adorned them (cfr. Pr. 3: 12). He also divided the earth from the water that surrounds it, and fixed it upon the immovable foundation of His own will. The animals also which are upon it He commanded by His own word into existence. So likewise, when He had formed the sea, and the living creatures that are in it, He enclosed them within their proper bounds by His own power. Above all, with His holy and undefiled hands He formed man, the most excellent of His creatures, and truly great through the

understanding given him — the express likeness of His own image. For thus says God: “Let us make man in Our image, and after Our likeness. So God made man; male and female He created them.” (Gen. 1: 26, 27).

Having thus finished all these things, He approved them, and blessed them, and said, “Increase and multiply.” (Gen. 1: 28).

We see, then, how all righteous men have been adorned with good works, and how the Lord Himself, adorning Himself with His works, rejoiced. Having therefore such an example, let us without delay accede to His will, and let us work the work of righteousness with our whole strength. **The good servant receives the bread of his labour with confidence; the lazy and slothful cannot look his employer in the face.** It is requisite, therefore, that we be prompt in the practice of well doing; for of Him are all things. And thus He forewarns us: “Behold, the Lord comes, and His reward is before His face (Is. 40: 10), to render to every man according to his work.” (Prv. 24: 12). He exhorts us, therefore, with our whole heart to attend to this, that we be not lazy or slothful in any good work. Let our boasting and our confidence be in Him. Let us submit ourselves to His will. Let us consider the whole multitude of His angels, how they stand ever ready to minister to His will. For the Scripture says, “Ten thousand times ten thousand stood around Him, and thousands of thousands ministered unto Him (Dan. 7: 10), and cried, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Sabaoth; the whole creation is full of His glory.” (Is. 6: 3). And let us therefore, conscientiously gathering together in harmony, cry to Him earnestly, as with one mouth, that we may be made partakers of His great and glorious promises. For the Scripture says, “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man, the things which He has prepared for those who love Him.” (1 Cor. 2: 9; cfr. Is. 64: 3).

Responsorial *Ps. 24: 9-10; Zec. 7: 9*

R: The Lord guides the humble according to justice, he teaches his ways to the poor. * all the paths of the Lord are truth and grace for those who observe his covenant.

V: Practise justice and faithfulness, exercise piety and mercy each one towards his neighbour.

R: All the paths of the Lord are truth and grace for those who observe his covenant.

Gospel Mk. 4: 21- 25

And he said to them, “Is a lamp brought in to be put under a bushel, or under a bed, and not on a stand? For there is nothing hid, except to be made manifest; nor is anything secret, except to come to light. If any man has ears to hear, let him hear”. And he said to them, “Take heed what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given you. For to him who has will more be given; and from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away”.

FRIDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading *Rm. 11:1-12*

God has not repudiated His people.

I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew. Do you not know what the scripture says of Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?

"Lord, they have killed your prophets, they have demolished your altars, and I alone am left, and they seek my life."

But what is God's reply to him? "I have kept for myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Ba'al." So too at the present time there is a remnant, chosen by grace. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works; otherwise grace would no longer be grace.

What then? **Israel failed to obtain what it sought.** The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that should not see and ears that should not hear, down to this very day."

And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, a pitfall and a retribution for them; let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs for ever."

So I ask, **have they stumbled so as to fall? By no means!** But through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. Now if their trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!

Responsorial *Rm. 11: 5, 7, 8; Jn. 12: 41*

R: So too at the present there is a remnant in Israel, chosen by grace; the others have been hardened, as it is written: * God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that should not see and ears that should not hear.

V: This Isaiah said when he saw the glory of Christ and spoke of him:

R: God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that should not see and ears that should not hear.

Second Reading *Book 4*

We are called Christians, that is people of God.

From the “Commentary on the prophet Isaiah” of St. Cyril of Alexandria, bishop.

“I will make descendants come from the east, from the west I will gather you” (Is. 43: 5), he promises to the Synagogue and to the Church formed from all the Jews and from the Gentiles whom he will gather from the east to the west, that is from every region and from every part of the world.

When he speaks of sons and of daughters who hasten from the four parts of the earth, he alludes to the time of the coming of Christ, in which the grace of adoption through the sanctification of the Spirit was given to the inhabitants of the earth. When he says: “Those who bear my name” (Is. 43: 7) he indicates that it is not a question of only one people, but a unique vocation, common to all.

We in fact bear the name of Christians, that is people of God. So also Peter, sending a letter to those who have been called through faith, says: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God” (1 Pet. 2: 9-10).

In fact, we have been renewed in Christ through the sanctification, brought back to the original splendour of the nature made in the image of he who has created us, for him and in him. And we are guided and begin again a new life: renouncing to sin and to the ancient corruption, we have put aside the old man, corrupted by the passions and by sin, and we have clothed ourselves with the new man, remade in the image of the one who has created us. Such a rebirth, that which we call new creation, has been carried out in Christ and we have had it not from a corrupted descendant, but from the living and eternal Word of God.

This people therefore, gathered from the four parts of the world and called by my name, not others whom I have created, formed and made in my glory. But only the Son can be truly called glory of God the Father; for him and in him in fact the Father is glorified, as Christ himself only attests: "I have glorified you on earth" (Jn. 17: 4). We who believe in him, know from this that we have been formed through him, because having become in keeping with him, the beauty of the divine nature shines in our hearts. Something similar the psalmist also says: "This is written for future generations, a new people will give praise to the Lord" (Ps. 101: 19). And when he then adds: He will guide a blind people (cfr. Is. 43: 8), he reveals wonderfully the inexpressible and marvellous depth of his power. Those whose minds were wrapped in the haze of error and of the diabolical perversity will radiate like the morning star, and rising for them like the sun of justice, he will make them sons not anymore of the night and of the darkness, but of the light and of the day, as we find written in St. Paul (1 Th. 5: 5).

Responsorial *Rm. 9: 24, 25, 26; Hos. 2: 25*

R: God has called us not only from among the Jews, but also from among the pagans; as Hosea says: * and it will come about that in that place itself where it was said: You are not my people, there they will be called sons of the living God.

V: And to No-people- of mine I will say: My people, and he will say: My God.

R: and it will come about that in that place itself where it was said: You are not my people, there they will be called sons of the living God.

CYCLE 2

First Reading *Gen. 24:33 - 41, 49- 67*

Isaac marries Rebecca

Then food was set before him to eat; but he said, "I will not eat until I have told my errand." He said, "Speak on." So he said, "I am Abraham's servant. The LORD has greatly blessed my master, and he has become

great; he has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, menservants and maidservants, camels and asses. And Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master when she was old; and to him he has given all that he has. My master made me swear, saying, 'You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell; but you shall go to my father's house and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son.' I said to my master, 'Perhaps the woman will not follow me.'

But he said to me, 'The LORD, before whom I walk, will send his angel with you and prosper your way; and you shall take a wife for my son from my kindred and from my father's house; then you will be free from my oath, when you come to my kindred; and if they will not give her to you, you will be free from my oath.'

Now then, if you will deal loyally and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand or to the left."

Then Laban and Bethu'el answered, "The thing comes from the LORD; we cannot speak to you bad or good. Behold, Rebecca is before you, take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the LORD has spoken."

When Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed himself to the earth before the LORD. And the servant brought forth jewellery of silver and of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebecca; he also gave to her brother and to her mother costly ornaments. And he and the men who were with him ate and drank, and they spent the night there. When they arose in the morning, he said, "Send me back to my master."

Her brother and her mother said, "Let the maiden remain with us a while, at least ten days; after that she may go." But he said to them, "Do not delay me, since the LORD has prospered my way; let me go that I may go to my master." They said, "We will call the maiden, and ask her." And they called Rebecca, and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" She said, "I will go." So they sent away Rebecca their sister and her nurse, and Abraham's servant and his men. And they blessed Rebecca, and said to her, "Our sister, be the mother of thousands of ten thousands; and may your descendants possess the gate of those who hate them!"

Then Rebecca and her maids arose, and rode upon the camels and followed the man; thus the servant took Rebecca, and went his

way. Now Isaac had come from Beer-la'hai-roi, and was dwelling in the Negeb. And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, there were camels coming. And Rebecca lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she alighted from the camel, and said to the servant, "Who is the man yonder, walking in the field to meet us?" The servant said, "It is my master." So she took her veil and covered herself.

And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. Then Isaac brought her into the tent, and took Rebecca, and she became his wife; and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Responsorial *Cfr. Gen. 24: 42, 27*

R: Today I arrived at the well and I said: * Lord God you have given success to my desire.

V: Blessed be the Lord, who has guided me by the right path up to the house of the brothers of my master.

R: Lord God you have given success to my desire.

Second Reading *Nm. 35: 1 – 8; 36*

The gifts of God are splendid and marvellous.

From the “Letter to the Corinthians” of St. Clement I, pope and martyr.

How blessed and wonderful, beloved, are the gifts of God! Life in immortality, splendour in righteousness, truth in perfect confidence, faith in assurance, self-control in holiness! And all these fall under the cognisance of our understanding now; what then shall those things be which are prepared for such as wait for Him? The Creator and Father of all worlds, the Most Holy, alone knows their amount and their beauty. Let us therefore earnestly strive to be found in the number of those that wait for Him, in order that we may share in His promised gifts.

But how, beloved, shall this be done? If our understanding be fixed by faith towards God; if we earnestly seek the things which are pleasing and acceptable to Him; if we do the things which are in harmony with His blameless will; and if we follow the way of truth, **casting away from us all**

unrighteousness and iniquity, along with all covetousness, strife, evil practices, deceit, whispering, and evil-speaking, all hatred of God, pride and haughtiness, vainglory and ambition.

For they that do such things are hateful to God; and not only they that do them but also they that take pleasure in those that do them. For the Scripture says, “But to the sinner God said, ‘Wherefore do you declare my statutes, and take my covenant into your mouth, seeing that you hate instruction, and cast my words behind you?’ (Ps. 49: 16-17).

This is the way, beloved, in which we find our Saviour, even Jesus Christ, the High Priest of all our offerings, the defender and helper of our infirmity. By Him we look up to the heights of heaven. By Him we behold, as in a glass, the immaculate and most excellent visage of God. By Him are the eyes of our hearts opened. By Him our foolish and darkened understanding blossoms up anew towards His marvellous light. By Him the Lord has willed that we should taste of immortal knowledge, “who, being the brightness of His majesty, is by so much greater than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they” (Heb. 1: 3, 4).

For it is thus written, “He makes His angels spirits, and His ministers a flame of fire.” (Heb. 1: 7). But concerning His Son the Lord spoke thus: “You are my Son, today have I begotten you. Ask of me, and I will give You the heathen for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Your possession.” (Ps. 2: 7-8). And again He says to Him, “Sit at My right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” (Ps. 109: 1; Heb. 1: 13).

But who are His enemies? All the wicked, and those who set themselves to oppose the will of God!

Responsorial *2 Cor. 10: 17-18; Jer. 9: 23*

R: Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord. * For it is not the man who commends himself who is approved, but the man whom the Lord commends.

V: Let him who wants to glory in himself boast of this: of knowing me, because I am the Lord;

R: For it is not the man who commends himself who is approved, but the man whom the Lord commends.

Gospel *Mk. 4: 26 – 34*

And he said, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he knows not how. The earth produces of itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come."

And he said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, **so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.**"

With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.

SATURDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading *Rm. 11:13-24*

If the root is healthy, the branches will also be healthy.

Now I am speaking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch then as I am an apostle to the Gentiles, I magnify my ministry in order to make my fellow Jews jealous, and thus save some of them. For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?

If the dough offered as first fruits is holy, so is the whole lump; and **if the root is holy, so are the branches**. But if some of the branches were broken off, and **you, a wild olive shoot, were grafted in their place to share the richness of the olive tree**, do not boast over the branches. If you do boast, remember it is **not you that support the root, but the root that supports you**.

You will say, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." That is true. They were broken off because of their unbelief, but you stand fast only through faith. So **do not become proud**, but **stand in awe**. For if God did not spare the natural branches, neither will he spare you. Note then the **kindness and the severity of God**: severity toward those who have fallen, but God's kindness to you, **provided you continue in his kindness**; otherwise you too will be cut off.

And even the others, if they do not persist in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for **God has the power to graft them in again**. For if **you have been** cut from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and **grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree**.

Responsorial *Cfr. Rm. 11: 23; 2 Cor. 3: 16*

R: And even the others, if they do not persist in their unbelief, will be grafted in; * God in fact has the power to graft them in again.

V: When they will convert to the Lord, the veil will be removed from their hearts.

R: God in fact has the power to graft them in again.

Second Reading Nm. 4 – 5

Go, instruct all the nations.

From the Decree “Ad Gentes” from the Second Vatican Council on the missionary activity of the Church.

Now, the Lord Jesus, before freely giving His life for the world, did so arrange the Apostles' ministry and promise to send the Holy Spirit that both they and the Spirit might be associated in effecting the work of salvation always and everywhere.

Throughout all ages, the Holy Spirit makes the entire Church "one in communion and in ministering; He equips her with various gifts of a hierarchical and charismatic nature," a giving life, soul-like, to ecclesiastical institutions and instilling into the hearts of the faithful the same missionary spirit which impelled Christ Himself. Sometimes He even visibly anticipates the Apostles' acting, just as He unceasingly accompanies and directs it in different ways. From the very beginning, the Lord Jesus "called to Himself those whom He wished; and He caused twelve of them to be with Him, and to be sent out preaching (Mk 3.13; cf. Mt. 10.1-42). Thus the Apostles were the first budding-forth of the New Israel, and at the same time the beginning of the sacred hierarchy. Then, when He had by His death and His resurrection completed once for all in Himself the mysteries of our salvation and the renewal of all things, the Lord, having now received all power in heaven and on earth (cf. Mt. 28.18), before He was taken up into heaven (cf. Acts 1.11), founded His Church as the sacrament of salvation and sent His Apostles into all the world just as He Himself had been sent by His Father (cf. Jn 20.21), commanding them: "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Mt. 28.19.). "Go into the whole world, preach the Gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he who does not believe, shall be condemned" (Mk 16.15.). Whence the duty that lies on the Church of spreading the faith and the salvation of Christ, not only in virtue of the express command which was inherited from the Apostles by the order of bishops, assisted by the priests, together with

the successor of Peter and supreme shepherd of the Church, but also in virtue of that life which flows from Christ into His members.

The mission of the Church, therefore, is fulfilled by that activity which makes her, obeying the command of Christ and influenced by the grace and love of the Holy Spirit, fully present to all men or nations, in order that, by the example of her life and by her preaching, by the sacraments and other means of grace, she may lead them to the faith, the freedom and the peace of Christ; that thus there may lie open before them a firm and free road to full participation in the mystery of Christ.

Responsorial *Mk. 16: 15-16; Jn. 3: 5*

R: Go out into the whole world and preach the gospel to every creature. *
He who will believe and will be baptised, will be saved.

V: If one is not born from water and from the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

R: He who will believe and will be baptised, will be saved.

CYCLE 2

First Reading *Gen. 25:7- 11, 19 – 34*

Death of Abraham. The birth of Esau and Jacob.

These are the days of the years of Abraham's life, a hundred and seventy-five years. Abraham breathed his last and died in a good old age, an old man and full of years, and was gathered to his people. Isaac and Ish'mael his sons buried him in the cave of Mach-pe'lah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, east of Mamre, the field that Abraham purchased from the Hittites. There Abraham was buried, with Sarah his wife. After the death of Abraham God blessed Isaac his son. And Isaac dwelt at Beer-la'hai-roi.

These are the descendants of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac was forty years old when he took

to wife Rebecca, the daughter of Bethu'el the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean.

And Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD granted his prayer, and Rebecca his wife conceived. The children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is thus, why do I live?" So she went to inquire of the LORD. And the LORD said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples, born of you, shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger." When her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold, there were twins in her womb. The first came forth red, all his body like a hairy mantle; so they called his name Esau. Afterward his brother came forth, and his hand had taken hold of Esau's heel; so his name was called Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

When the boys grew up, Esau was a skilful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents. Isaac loved Esau, because he ate of his game; but Rebecca loved Jacob. Once when Jacob was boiling pottage, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. And Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red pottage, for I am famished!" (Therefore his name was called Edom.)

Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob.

Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentils, and he ate and drank, and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

Responsorial *Sir. 44: 20; Gal. 3: 9*

R: Abraham was great, the father of many nations; no one was similar to him in glory. * He kept the laws of the Most High and entered into a covenant with him.

V: Therefore, those who have faith are blessed together with Abraham who believed.

R: He kept the laws of the Most High and entered into a covenant with him.

Second Reading *Nm. 37 – 38*

Let us take an example from our own body.

From the “Letter to the Corinthians” of St. Clement I, pope and martyr.

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

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

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

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

Let him that is pure in the flesh not grow proud of it, and boast, knowing that it was another who bestowed on him the gift of continence. Let us consider, then, brethren, of what matter we were made, — who and what manner of beings we came into the world, as it were out of a sepulchre, and from utter darkness. He who made us and fashioned us, having prepared His bountiful gifts for us before we were born, introduced us into His world. Since, therefore, we receive all these things from Him, we ought for everything to give Him thanks; to who be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Responsorial *1 Cor. 4: 6-7; Sir. 10: 26*

R: Do not take pride in one man over against another. * For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

V: Do not be conceited in fulfilling your work.

R: For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

Gospel *Mk. 4:35 – 41*

On that day, when evening had come, he said to them, "Let us go across to the other side." And leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat, just as he was. And other boats were with him. And a great storm of wind arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already filling. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care if we perish?"

And he awoke and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith?" And they were filled with awe, and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?"