

WEEK 3

SUNDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Ap. 6: 1-17*

The Lamb opens the book of God.

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

[Rev 6:1] Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say, as with a voice of thunder, "Come!"

[Rev 6:2] And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and its rider had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

[Rev 6:3] When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!"

[Rev 6:4] And out came another horse, bright red; its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that men should slay one another; and he was given a great sword.

[Rev 6:5] When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" And I saw, and behold, a black horse, and its rider had a balance in his hand;

[Rev 6:6] and I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; but do not harm oil and wine!"

[Rev 6:7] When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!"

[Rev 6:8] And I saw, and behold, a pale horse, and its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him; and they were given power over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth.

[Rev 6:9] When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne;

[Rev 6:10] they cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?"

[Rev 6:11] Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been.

[Rev 6:12] When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood,

[Rev 6:13] and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale;

[Rev 6:14] the sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.

[Rev 6:15] Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong, and every one, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains,

[Rev 6:16] calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;

[Rev 6:17] for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand before it?"

Responsorial. *Cfr. Ap. 6: 9, 10, 11*

R: I saw under the altar of God the souls of those who had been immolated. They cried out in a loud voice: how long will it be before you judge and avenge our blood? * And they were told to wait patiently for a little while, until the number of their brothers would be complete, alleluia.

V: They were each given a white robe.

R: and they were told to wait patiently for a little while, until the number of their brothers would be complete, alleluia.

Second Reading. *Book 2, 11*

The voice of the souls is their desire full of love.

A reading from the “Moralia” of St. Gregory the Great, pope.

What is it for the souls to ask for vengeance, if not to desire the day of the final judgement and the resurrection of the dead? Great is their cry, great the desire. In fact, a person who desires little cries less; and the voice that he makes the ear of the infinite Spirit hear is greater the more it is infused in his desire. The words of the soul are in fact the desires. If the word were not

desire, the prophet would not have said: You give ear to the desire of their hearts (cfr. Ps. 9: 38).

But since the soul that asks behaves differently from him of whom it asks, while the souls of the saints adhere to God in the intimacy of the hearts and in this they find rest, how can it be said that they ask, given that their will is in perfect communion with that of God? How can it be said that they ask, if they are sure of the will of God, and of the future? The souls established in God do not ask because they desire something that is different from his will, which they see well; but the more ardently they adhere to him, the more they are moved by him to ask him that he does all that they know that he wants to do. They quench themselves in him who nourishes their thirst; and, in a way that is still incomprehensible for us, they already satisfy themselves in foretasting with the mind that which they wait for through prayer.

They would not be in accordance with the will of the Creator if they were not to ask for that which they see is his will; and they would be less united to him if they were to ask with a weak desire for that which he wants to give.

To them comes the answer from heaven of “being patient a little longer, until the roll was complete and their fellow servants and brothers had been killed just as they had been” (Ap. 6: 11)

To say to the desiring soul, to be patient a little longer, is already to make the ardour of their desire taste the first fruits of a pacifying consolation: in such a way that their loving desire may be the voice of the soul and the answer of God may confirm their desires with the certainty of the retribution.

His answer of waiting the reunion with the brothers consists in infusing in their souls the desire of waiting voluntarily the delay, so that, while desiring the resurrection of the body, they may rejoice because the number of the brothers increases.

Responsorial. *Ap. 6: 9-10*

R: I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been immolated for the sake of the word of God and of the testimony that they had rendered; and they cried out in a loud voice: * How much longer, Lord, before you will take vengeance for our blood? Alleluia.

V: Under the throne of God all the saints cried out:

R: How much longer, Lord, before you will take vengeance for our blood?
Alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Act. 8: 4-25*

Philip in Samaria. Simon the Magician.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

[Acts 8:4] Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.

[Acts 8:5] Philip went down to a city of Sama'ria, and proclaimed to them the Christ.

[Acts 8:6] And the multitudes with one accord gave heed to what was said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs which he did.

[Acts 8:7] For unclean spirits came out of many who were possessed, crying with a loud voice; and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed.

[Acts 8:8] So there was much joy in that city.

[Acts 8:9] But there was a man named Simon who had previously practiced magic in the city and amazed the nation of Sama'ria, saying that he himself was somebody great.

[Acts 8:10] They all gave heed to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is that power of God which is called Great."

[Acts 8:11] And they gave heed to him, because for a long time he had amazed them with his magic.

[Acts 8:12] But when they believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

[Acts 8:13] Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles performed, he was amazed.

[Acts 8:14] Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Sama'ria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John,

[Acts 8:15] who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit;

[Acts 8:16] for it had not yet fallen on any of them, but they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

[Acts 8:17] Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Spirit.

[Acts 8:18] Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,

[Acts 8:19] saying, "Give me also this power, that any one on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

[Acts 8:20] But Peter said to him, "Your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!

[Acts 8:21] You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.

[Acts 8:22] Repent therefore of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you.

[Acts 8:23] For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."

[Acts 8:24] And Simon answered, "Pray for me to the Lord, that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."

[Acts 8:25] Now when they had testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

Responsorial. *Act. 8: 14-15; Mt. 10: 8*

R: When the apostles heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. * They went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. Alleluia.

V: Jesus said to his disciples: Freely you have received, freely give.

R: They went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. Alleluia.

Second Reading. *Disc. 34, 1-3. 5-6*

Let us sing to the Lord the song of love.

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

‘Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise in the assembly of the saints’.

We are told to sing to the Lord a new song. A new man knows a new song. A song is a thing of joy and, if we think carefully about it, a thing of love. So the man who has learned to love a new life has learned to sing a new song. Therefore we need to be told the nature of this new life, for the sake of the new song. For a new man, a new song and the New Testament all belong to the same kingdom. So the new man will sing a new song and belong to the New Testament.

Everybody loves; the question is what does he love? Consequently we are not told not to love, but to choose what to love. But how can we choose, unless we are first chosen? We cannot love unless we are first loved. Listen to the words of John the apostle: 'We love, because he first loved us'. If you search for the reason why a man loves God you will find no other reason at all, save that God first loved him. He gave us himself as the object of our love, and he gave us the source of our love. If you wish to know what he gave as the source of our love, you can find a clearer explanation in the words of the apostle Paul: 'The love of God is poured out in our hearts'. Where does it come from? From ourselves? No. Where then? Through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us'.

Since, then, we have such an assurance, let us love God by the gift of God. As Saint John himself expresses it more clearly: 'God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him'. It is not enough to say: 'Love comes from God'. Which of us would dare to say what Saint John said: 'God is love'? He knew what he was saying, for he experienced this love himself.

God offers himself to us; there is no need to offer us more. He calls out to us: 'Love me and you will possess me, because you cannot love me unless you possess me'.

My brothers, my sons, children of the Catholic Church, holy seeds of heaven, you who have been born again in Christ, born from above, listen to me, or rather, through me: 'Sing to the Lord a new song'. But I do sing', you may reply. You sing, of course you sing, I can hear you; but make sure that your life sings the same tune as your mouth.

Sing with your voices, sing with your hearts, sing with your lips, sing with your lives. 'Sing to the Lord a new song'. Do you ask what you should sing about the one whom you love? Of course you want to sing about the one you love. Do you ask what you should sing in praise of him? Listen: 'Sing to the Lord a new song'. Are you looking for praises to sing? His

praise is in the assembly of the saints'. The singer himself is the praise contained in the song.

Do you want to speak the praise of God? Be yourselves what you speak. If you live good lives, you are his praise.

Responsorial. *Cf. Rm. 6: 4; 1 Jn. 3: 23; Jud. 16: 15*

R: Christ was raised from death by the glorious power of the Father; let us, too, live a new life, * and let us love one another just as he commanded us, alleluia.

V: Let us sing a song to the Lord, let us sing a new song to our God,

R: and let us love one another just as he commanded us, alleluia.

YEAR A

Gospel. *Lk. 24: 13-35*

They recognised him in the breaking of the bread.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.

[Luke 24:13] That very day two of them were going to a village named Emma'us, about seven miles from Jerusalem,

[Luke 24:14] and talking with each other about all these things that had happened.

[Luke 24:15] While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them.

[Luke 24:16] But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.

[Luke 24:17] And he said to them, "What is this conversation which you are holding with each other as you walk?" And they stood still, looking sad.

[Luke 24:18] Then one of them, named Cle'opas, answered him, "Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

[Luke 24:19] And he said to them, "What things?" And they said to him, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people,

[Luke 24:20] and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him.

[Luke 24:21] But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since this happened.

[Luke 24:22] Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning

[Luke 24:23] and did not find his body; and they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive.

[Luke 24:24] Some of those who were with us went to the tomb, and found it just as the women had said; but him they did not see."

[Luke 24:25] And he said to them, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!

[Luke 24:26] Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?"

[Luke 24:27] And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

[Luke 24:28] So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He appeared to be going further,

[Luke 24:29] but they constrained him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent." So he went in to stay with them.

[Luke 24:30] When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them.

[Luke 24:31] And their eyes were opened and they recognized him; and he vanished out of their sight.

[Luke 24:32] They said to each other, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?"

[Luke 24:33] And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven gathered together and those who were with them,

[Luke 24:34] who said, "The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!"

[Luke 24:35] Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

Third Reading. Disc. 234, 1-2

The resurrection of Christ according to Luke.

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

In these days the resurrection of the Lord is read according to all the four evangelists. Therefore it is necessary to read them all because the individual gospels do not say everything, but that which one has omitted the

other has said; and in a certain way one has left place to the other so that all would be necessary.

Of those two disciples who did not belong to the twelve, the evangelist Mark writes briefly while Luke deals with them more extensively. They above all were the disciples to whom the Lord appeared while they were in journey and walked with them. Mark says only that he appeared to the two while they were walking; the evangelist Luke then also narrates that which they had said, that which he had answered, up till where he had walked with them and how they had recognised him in the breaking of the bread. Why therefore, brothers, do we examine it? In order to root ourselves in the faith in Christ the Lord risen from the dead. Already we believed when we had heard the Gospel and today we have entered into this Church already believing; yet I do not know why we listen with joy to that which renews the memory. How can our heart not rejoice, from the moment that it seems to us that we are better than those who walked along the road and to whom the Lord appeared? We, in fact, believe that which they did not yet believe. They had lost hope; but we do not doubt, and exactly of that which was the cause of their doubt.

They had lost hope because the Lord had been crucified; it was evident in their words, when he had asked them: "What are these discourses that you are making among yourselves" and why are you sad? And they: "Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know what has happened there?" But he answered: "What things?" He asked about himself though knowing everything, because he wanted to announce himself to them. And they: "All that regards Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet who was powerful in works and in words; and how the high priests and our leaders had him crucified. With all this three days have passed since these things happened. We had hoped..." (Lk. 24: 17, 18- 21).

We had hoped: now you do not hope anymore? Is your adhesion as disciples only this? The thief on the cross surpasses you. You have forgotten he who taught you: he realised with whom he was hanging on the cross. We hoped. What did you hope? "That Israel would be freed" (Lk. 24: 21). That which you hoped for and had lost when he was crucified, that crucified thief recognised in him. He says in fact to the Lord: "Jesus, remember me when you will enter into your kingdom" (Lk. 23: 42). This is because he was the Redeemer of Israel. That cross was a school. Here the Master taught the thief. The wood from which he hung became the throne from which he

taught. But he who has returned to you, recalls your hope. And so it was. Yet remember, O beloved, that the Lord Jesus wanted to be recognised in the breaking of the bread, by those who had their eyes so obscured that they did not recognise him. The faithful comprehend that which I say: they recognise Christ in the breaking of the bread. Not in fact every bread, but that bread which receives the blessings of Christ, becomes the body of Christ.

Responsorial. *Lk. 24: 32, 35, 33*

R: Did not our hearts burn in our breasts as we spoke with him along the way, when he explained the Scriptures to us? * And they narrated what had happened along the way and how they had recognised him in the breaking of the bread, alleluia.

V: They left immediately and returned to Jerusalem, where they found the Eleven and the others who were with them gathered together,

R: and they narrated what had happened along the way and how they had recognised him in the breaking of the bread, alleluia.

YEAR B

Gospel. *Lk. 24: 35-48*

The Christ had to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.

[Luke 24:35] Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

[Luke 24:36] As they were saying this, Jesus himself stood among them.

[Luke 24:37] But they were startled and frightened, and supposed that they saw a spirit.

[Luke 24:38] And he said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do questionings rise in your hearts?

[Luke 24:39] See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have."

[Luke 24:41] And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, he said to them, "Have you anything here to eat?"

[Luke 24:42] They gave him a piece of broiled fish,

[Luke 24:43] and he took it and ate before them.

[Luke 24:44] Then he said to them, "These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled."

[Luke 24:45] Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures,

[Luke 24:46] and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,

[Luke 24:47] and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

[Luke 24:48] You are witnesses of these things.

Third Reading. Book 12 c.1

Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.

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

He who earlier had been slow in the faith was ready to make his confession, and in a brief time he was healed. Only eight days had passed and Christ removed the obstacles of disbelief, showing the signs of the nails and the same side.

While the volume of the earthly body demanded a suitable passage and asked for as much space as its size, our Lord Jesus Christ, having entered marvellously through closed doors, uncovered for Thomas his side and showed the wounds imprinted in his flesh, healing thus, because of him, the faith of everyone.

In fact it is written that only Thomas had said: "Unless I see the signs of the nails in his hands and put my hand in the place of the nails and if I do not put my hand into his side, I will not believe" (Jn. 20: 25). But the sin of disbelief was in a certain way common to all of them, and we know that the minds of the other disciples was not without doubts, even though they said to the same Thomas: "We have seen the Lord" (Jn. 20: 25).

In fact, to them who "because of their great joy still did not believe and were amazed, he said: Do you have something to eat? They offered him a piece of grilled fish; he took it and ate it in front of them" (Lk. 24: 41-43).

Do you see how the doubt of disbelief did not deceive only the blessed Thomas, but also the souls of the other disciples?

Therefore, surprise rendered the disciples slower in the faith. In fact, he who observes and looks does not have any excuse for disbelief; for this the

blessed Thomas with certainty confessed: “My Lord and my God!” Jesus said to him: “Because you have seen me, you have believed: blessed are those who though not having seen will believe” (Jn. 20: 28-29).

This expression of the Saviour is full of a singular providence and could be of the greatest utility for us. In fact also in this he has provided quite a lot to our souls, because he is good, and wants all men to be saved and to reach the knowledge of the truth, as it is written. All this is truly worthy of admiration.

In order to offer indistinctly to all men the credibility of the faith, it was necessary to have patience with Thomas who spoke in that way and with the other disciples who thought that Christ was a spirit and a ghost; and to show the signs of the nails and the wound of the side, and to take food in an unusual way and without need; so that there would not remain absolutely any reason for disbelief in them who searched for these things in order to believe.

But he instead who welcomes that which he has not seen and believes to be true that which the Master makes him hear, honours with great faith the one who is preached.

For this whoever will believe the voice of the holy apostles, who, as Saint Luke says, were the witnesses of the facts and ministers of the word, are said to be blessed. To them we must also obey, if we desire eternal life and consider it a great thing to live in the heavenly dwellings.

Responsorial. *1 Cor. 15: 4-5, 7; Jn. 20: 27; Lk. 1: 2*

R: Christ rose on the third day according to the Scriptures and appeared to Cephas and then to the twelve. After this he appeared to James, and then to all the apostles. * Doubt no longer but believe! Alleluia.

V: It has been transmitted to us by those who were witnesses from the beginning.

R: Doubt no longer but believe! Alleluia.

YEAR C

Gospel. *Jn. 21: 1-19*

Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and so also with the fish.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 21:1] After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tibe'ri-as; and he revealed himself in this way.

[John 21:2] Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathan'a-el of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zeb'edee, and two others of his disciples were together.

[John 21:3] Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat; but that night they caught nothing.

[John 21:4] Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the beach; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus.

[John 21:5] Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any fish?" They answered him, "No."

[John 21:6] He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, for the quantity of fish.

[John 21:7] That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his clothes, for he was stripped for work, and sprang into the sea.

[John 21:8] But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off.

[John 21:9] When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish lying on it, and bread.

[John 21:10] Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish that you have just caught."

[John 21:11] So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred and fifty-three of them; and although there were so many, the net was not torn.

[John 21:12] Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." Now none of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord.

[John 21:13] Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish.

[John 21:14] This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

[John 21:15] When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs."

[John 21:16] A second time he said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to

him, "Tend my sheep."

[John 21:17] He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep."

[John 21:18] Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go."

[John 21:19] (This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God.) And after this he said to him, "Follow me."

Third Reading. *Disc. 16, 2-3*

The Lord questioning Peter, questions us...

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

When you hear the words of the Lord: "Peter, do you love me?" (Jn. 21: 16), consider them as a mirror in which you see yourself. Since, what else did Peter represent if not the image of the Church? The Lord therefore, questioning Peter was questioning us, was questioning the Church. In order to convince us that truly Peter was the figure of the Church let us consider that passage of the Gospel: "You are Peter and on this rock I will build my Church and the doors of the underworld will not prevail against it. To you I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Mt. 16: 18-19).

Only one man receives them. Christ himself has explained what these keys of the kingdom of heaven are: "All that you will bind on the earth will be bound in heaven, and all that you untie on earth will be untied in heaven (Mt. 16: 19).

If this were said only to Peter, it would have been only Peter who would have done it. Dying, he would have gone. Who would tie now, who would untie? I dare to say that we have these keys. What do I say? That we tie and we untie? Even better, you also bind and unbind: he who separates himself from your society is bound; and he who is separated from your society is bound by you; reconciling himself, he is untied by you because you pray to God for him.

All of us in fact love Christ and we are his members. When he entrusts the flock to the shepherds, the number of the shepherds enters into the body

of the unique shepherd. In order to understand him, behold: Peter is certainly a shepherd, Paul is a shepherd, John, James, Andrew and all the other apostles without doubt are shepherds. Then, in what way is it true that there will be “only one flock and only one shepherd?” (Jn. 10: 16). Because the entire immense number of shepherds will be led back to the body of the only unique shepherd. There you also are, being his members.

These members Saul oppressed, he who first was a persecutor and then preacher, desiring to kill them in order to dissuade them from the faith in Christ. But by a voice all his rage was prostrated. Which voice? “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” (Act. 9: 4). What could he do to him who sits in heaven? How could he harm the Word? He could do nothing anymore to him, yet he cried out: “You persecute me” in this way he declared that we are his members. Therefore it is the love of Christ that we love in you; it is the love of Christ that you love in us; it leads us, amidst temptations, trials, sweat, misery and groans, there, where there is no toil, no misery, no tears, no sighs, no trouble; where no one is born and no one dies, where no one fears the anger of the powerful, because he adheres to the face of the Almighty.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Jn. 21: 17, 15*

R: Peter, do you love me? Lord, you know everything, you know that I love you. * Feed my sheep, alleluia.

V: Simon of John, do you love me more than these others? Certainly, Lord, you know that I love you.

R: Feed my sheep, alleluia.

MONDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Ap. 7: 1-17*

The multitude of those marked with the seal of God.

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

[Rev 7:1] After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree.

[Rev 7:2] Then I saw another angel ascend from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea,

[Rev 7:3] saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God upon their foreheads."

[Rev 7:4] And I heard the number of the sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand sealed, out of every tribe of the sons of Israel,

[Rev 7:5] twelve thousand sealed out of the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand of the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand of the tribe of Gad,

[Rev 7:6] twelve thousand of the tribe of Asher, twelve thousand of the tribe of Naph'tali, twelve thousand of the tribe of Manas'seh,

[Rev 7:7] twelve thousand of the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand of the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand of the tribe of Is'sachar,

[Rev 7:8] twelve thousand of the tribe of Zeb'ulun, twelve thousand of the tribe of Joseph, twelve thousand sealed out of the tribe of Benjamin.

[Rev 7:9] After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands,

[Rev 7:10] and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!"

[Rev 7:11] And all the angels stood round the throne and round the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God,

[Rev 7:12] saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God for ever and

ever! Amen."

[Rev 7:13] Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and whence have they come?"

[Rev 7:14] I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

[Rev 7:15] Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night within his temple; and he who sits upon the throne will shelter them with his presence.

[Rev 7:16] They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.

[Rev 7:17] For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water; and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Responsorial. *Cfr. Ap. 7: 13, 14; 6: 9*

R: Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from? They are those who have come from the great tribulations: * they have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, alleluia.

V: I saw under the altar the souls of those who were immolated because of the word of God and because of the testimony that they have given:

R: they have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb, alleluia.

Second Reading. *C. 2*

Elected race, royal priesthood.

A reading from the "Commentary on the first letter of Peter" of St. Bede the Venerable, presbyter.

‘You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood’. This compliment was addressed through Moses in time gone by to God’s ancient people, and now the apostle Peter rightly addresses it to the Gentiles. For they have come to believe in Christ, who as the cornerstone has associated the Gentiles with the salvation which belonged to Israel.

He calls them a ‘chosen race’ on account of their faith, to distinguish them from those who rejected the living rock and themselves have been rejected.

He calls them a 'royal priesthood' because they are members of the body of the supreme king and true priest. As king he grants to his people a kingdom; as high priest he washes away their sins by the sacrifice of his own blood. He names them a 'royal priesthood' as a reminder to hope for an eternal kingdom, and to offer to God without ceasing the sacrifice of a sinless life.

They are called also 'a holy nation and God's own people', in accordance with the apostle Paul's explanation of the teaching of the prophet: ' "My righteous one lives by faith; and if he shrinks back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him". But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and keep their souls'. And in the Acts of the Apostles Saint Paul says: 'The holy Spirit has made you guardians to rule the Church of the Lord which he obtained with his own blood'.

We have become 'God's own people' through the blood of our Redeemer; for in time gone by the people of Israel were redeemed from Egypt by the blood of the lamb.

Accordingly in the following verse he once more recalls the mystical sense of this event in the Old Testament, and explains that it is to be fulfilled again spiritually by the new people of God in these words: 'That you may declare his wonderful deeds'. The people who were freed by Moses from slavery in Egypt, after the crossing of the Red Sea and the drowning of Pharaoh's army, sang a hymn of triumph to the Lord; so too, since we have received pardon for our sins in baptism, we should express due thanks for the heavenly graces we have received.

For the Egyptians, who oppressed God's people, and who stand for darkness and suffering, are an apt symbol for the sins which harass us, but which have been destroyed in baptism.

The liberation of the children of Israel, and the journey by which they were led to the homeland they had long ago been promised, correspond to the mystery of our redemption, through which we make our way to the brightness of our heavenly home, with the grace of Christ as our light and our guide. The light of grace is symbolized by the pillar of cloud and fire that throughout their journey protected them from the darkness of the night, and led them along their secret path to their home in the Promised Land.

Responsorial. *1 Pt. 2: 9; Deut. 7: 7; 13: 5*

R: You are a chosen race, a holy nation, a people claimed by God for his own, * to proclaim the triumphs of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light, alleluia.

V: The Lord chose you and redeemed you from the land of slavery,

R: to proclaim the triumphs of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light, alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Act. 8:26-40*

Philip baptises the eunuch.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

[Acts 8:26] But an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is a desert road.

[Acts 8:27] And he rose and went. And behold, an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a minister of the Can'dace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of all her treasure, had come to Jerusalem to worship

[Acts 8:28] and was returning; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah.

[Acts 8:29] And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot."

[Acts 8:30] So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

[Acts 8:31] And he said, "How can I, unless some one guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

[Acts 8:32] Now the passage of the scripture which he was reading was this: "As a sheep led to the slaughter or a lamb before its shearer is dumb, so he opens not his mouth.

[Acts 8:33] In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken up from the earth."

[Acts 8:34] And the eunuch said to Philip, "About whom, pray, does the prophet say this, about himself or about some one else?"

[Acts 8:35] Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this scripture he told him the good news of Jesus.

[Acts 8:36] And as they went along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What is to prevent my being baptized?"

[Acts 8:38] And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him.

[Acts 8:39] And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught up Philip; and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

[Acts 8:40] But Philip was found at Azo'tus, and passing on he preached the gospel to all the towns till he came to Caesare'a.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Is. 53: 7, 12; Ps. 21: 28*

R: He was like a lamb led to the slaughter and he did not open his mouth: * he handed himself over to death in order to give life to his people, alleluia, alleluia.

V: All the ends of the earth will remember and return to the Lord, all the families of the nations will prostrate themselves in front of him.

R: He handed himself over to death in order to give life to his people, alleluia, alleluia.

Second Reading. *Book 1*

To follow Christ is our salvation.

A reading from "The Pedagogy" of Clement of Alexandria.

Baptised, we are illuminated; illuminated, we are adopted as sons; adopted, we are led to perfection; perfect, we are made immortal. "I have said, he says, you are gods, you are all children of the Most High" (Ps. 81: 6). Baptism is called by different names: grace, illumination, perfection, bath. Bath because through it sins are taken away. Grace, through which the punishment due to sins is remitted. Illumination, that makes us look at the holy and saving light that is God. We say then that that which does not lack anything is perfect. It would be truly absurd to say that the grace of God is

not perfect and complete in all senses: he who is perfect can give only perfect things. In the same way that he commands and all things exist, so also, by the simple fact that he wants to lavish his grace, that grace will be full. That which will happen in the future is anticipated through the power of his will. It follows that the liberation from sin is the beginning of salvation; from the first beginning of life, we have become perfect. Separated from death, we already live.

Therefore to follow Christ is our salvation. All that which has been done is life in him. “Truly, truly I say to you: he who listens to my word and believes in him who has sent me, has eternal life and will not go to meet his judgement, but he has passed from death to life” (Jn. 5: 24).

The perfection of life is uniquely in believing and in being regenerated. God is never inefficacious. For him to want is to operate, for which the world was created through an act of his will: thus having proposed to save men, he created the Church. He knows those whom he has called and saved. He has called them and saved them in the same moment. You yourselves, says the Apostle, are “taught by God” (cfr. Jn. 6: 45; Is. 54: 13; 1 Jn. 2: 27). It is not right therefore to consider imperfect all that he has taught. And that which we learn from him is the eternal salvation of the eternal Saviour, “to him be glory forever and ever. Amen” (Gal. 1: 5).

He who is regenerated and illuminated, as the same word indicates, is immediately freed from the darkness and in the same moment receives the light. Let us therefore wash all our sins and let there not remain in us any more any trace of evil. In fact, through this unique grace of illumination they do not have anymore the same habits as before; because there gushes forth a knowledge that enlightens the mind in a way that, while we were coarse and ignorant, we immediately become disciples. Does this happen already with the initiation? It is not possible to establish in which moment. Certainly, the catechesis leads to the faith. But faith is taught to us by the divine Spirit in baptism. And since the faith is the universal salvation of the human nature, the impartiality and the communication of the just and kind God is the same towards everyone. Paul has explained this clearly when he says: “Before we came to the faith, we were all enclosed under the custody of the law, waiting for the faith that had to be revealed. Thus the law has been like a pedagogy that has led us to Christ, so that we could be justified through faith. But as soon as the faith arrived, we are not any more under a pedagogy” (Gal. 3: 23-25).

You have heard that we are not anymore under that law full of fear, but under the Word who is the Pedagogy of the free will? Then Paul adds the concept that is far away from any distinction of persons: "All of you in fact are sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. All baptised in Christ, you have all clothed yourselves in Christ, and there are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3: 26-28).

Responsorial. *1 Pt. 1: 21; Dn. 7: 13, 14*

R: Through him you now have faith in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory. * And so your faith and your hope are fixed in God, alleluia.

V: The One of great age gave him power, glory and the kingdom.

R: And so your faith and your hope are fixed in God, alleluia.

Gospel. *Jn. 6: 22-29*

Do not search for the food that perishes but that which lasts for the eternal life.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 6:22] On the next day the people who remained on the other side of the sea saw that there had been only one boat there, and that Jesus had not entered the boat with his disciples, but that his disciples had gone away alone.

[John 6:23] However, boats from Tiber'i-as came near the place where they ate the bread after the Lord had given thanks.

[John 6:24] So when the people saw that Jesus was not there, nor his disciples, they themselves got into the boats and went to Caper'na-um, seeking Jesus.

[John 6:25] When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?"

[John 6:26] Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves.

[John 6:27] Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal."

[John 6:28] Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?"

[John 6:29] Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

TUESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Ap. 8: 1-13*

The seven angels who punish the world.

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

[Rev 8:1] When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.

[Rev 8:2] Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them.

[Rev 8:3] And another angel came and stood at the altar with a golden censer; and he was given much incense to mingle with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar before the throne;

[Rev 8:4] and the smoke of the incense rose with the prayers of the saints from the hand of the angel before God.

[Rev 8:5] Then the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth; and there were peals of thunder, voices, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake.

[Rev 8:6] Now the seven angels who had the seven trumpets made ready to blow them.

[Rev 8:7] The first angel blew his trumpet, and there followed hail and fire, mixed with blood, which fell on the earth; and a third of the earth was burnt up, and a third of the trees were burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

[Rev 8:8] The second angel blew his trumpet, and something like a great mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea;

[Rev 8:9] and a third of the sea became blood, a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.

[Rev 8:10] The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the fountains of water.

[Rev 8:11] The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died of the water, because it was made bitter.

[Rev 8:12] The fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun was struck, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of their light was darkened; a third of the day was kept from shining, and likewise a third of the night.

[Rev 8:13] Then I looked, and I heard an eagle crying with a loud voice, as it flew in midheaven, "Woe, woe, woe to those who dwell on the earth, at the blasts of the other trumpets which the three angels are about to blow!"

Responsorial. *Cfr. Ap. 8: 3-4; 5: 8*

R: Another angel came and stood at the altar, he was holding a gold censer. He was given a great quantity of incense, * and the smoke of the incense rose before God, alleluia.

V: Each angel had cups of gold filled with perfume, which are the prayers of the saints;

R: and the smoke of the incense rose before God, alleluia.

Second Reading. *Book 4*

We are justified through grace.

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

If “every good present and every perfect gift comes from on high and descends from the Father of light” (Jm. 1: 17) how will the knowledge of Christ who is at the right hand of the Father not be a gift and how can the knowledge of the truth not be retained superior to every grace? The Father does not let the impure know Christ, nor does he infuse the efficacious grace of his Spirit in those who persist in going far away towards an incurable incredulity; since it is not good to pour out the precious perfume into the mud.

For this the prophet Isaiah commands those who want to draw near to Christ to first purify themselves with some good works: “Search for the Lord while he is still to be found, invoke him while he is close. Let the wicked abandon his ways and the iniquitous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord who will have mercy on him and to our God who is rich in forgiving” (Is. 55: 6-7).

Do you see that he says to first of all abandon the old path and to withdraw from iniquitous thoughts, in order to obtain the remission of sins

through a steady faith in Christ. We are in fact justified not through the work of the law, but by means of the grace that comes from him, from him who from on high forgets our sins.

Perhaps someone will say: what has impeded him from forgetting and granting the remission of sins to the Jews and to Israel also, together with us?

In reality it was necessary that he who is infinitely good acted in this way. And how can he have shown himself to be true, if to us he said: "I have not come to call the just, but the sinners"? (Mt. 9:13).

What can we answer? The grace of the Saviour is destined first of all only to the Israelites: Christ has been sent, as he himself asserts, to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

And yet, also to those who wanted to believe was granted the possibility to accede to eternal life: whoever behaved honestly and searched for the truth, was saved by means of the faith, helped by the grace of God the Father. On the contrary the presumptuous Pharisee, with those hard headed pontiffs and elders of the people, did not want to believe, even though they had earlier been instructed by Moses and by the prophets. And having made themselves, because of their wickedness, unworthy of eternal life, they did not receive the illumination that comes from God the Father.

You will find an example in the Old Testament: as in fact those who doubted God in the desert were not allowed to enter into the promised land, so also those, who because of incredulity despised Christ, were not allowed to enter into the kingdom of heaven, of which the promised land is a figure.

Responsorial. *Rm. 3: 21-24; Act. 2: 39*

R: Now has the justice of God been manifested, through faith in Christ Jesus. There is no distinction: all have sinned and are without the glory of God, * but they are justified freely through his grace, alleluia.

V: The promise is for all those who are far away, all those whom the Lord will call,

R: but they are justified freely through his grace, alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Act. 9: 1-22*

The vocation of Saul

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

[Acts 9:1] But Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest

[Acts 9:2] and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

[Acts 9:3] Now as he journeyed he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed about him.

[Acts 9:4] And he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

[Acts 9:5] And he said, "Who are you, Lord?" And he said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting;

[Acts 9:6] but rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do."

[Acts 9:7] The men who were traveling with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.

[Acts 9:8] Saul arose from the ground; and when his eyes were opened, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus.

[Acts 9:9] And for three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

[Acts 9:10] Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Anani'as. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Anani'as." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."

[Acts 9:11] And the Lord said to him, "Rise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for a man of Tarsus named Saul; for behold, he is praying,

[Acts 9:12] and he has seen a man named Anani'as come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight."

[Acts 9:13] But Anani'as answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to thy saints at Jerusalem;

[Acts 9:14] and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call upon thy name."

[Acts 9:15] But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;

[Acts 9:16] for I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."

[Acts 9:17] So Anani'as departed and entered the house. And laying his hands on him he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the road by which you came, has sent me that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit."

[Acts 9:18] And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. Then he rose and was baptized,

[Acts 9:19] and took food and was strengthened. For several days he was with the disciples at Damascus.

[Acts 9:20] And in the synagogues immediately he proclaimed Jesus, saying, "He is the Son of God."

[Acts 9:21] And all who heard him were amazed, and said, "Is not this the man who made havoc in Jerusalem of those who called on this name? And he has come here for this purpose, to bring them bound before the chief priests."

[Acts 9:22] But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ.

Responsorial. *Gal. 1: 15, 16; Is. 49: 1*

R: God chose me from the womb of my mother and called me with his grace in order to reveal his Son to me, * so that I could announce him in the midst of the pagans. Alleluia, alleluia.

V: From the mother's womb the Lord has called me, he pronounced my name right from the womb of my mother,

R: so that I could announce him in the midst of the pagans. Alleluia, alleluia.

Second Reading. *Book 4*

Christ is the first-born of those who rise from the dead.

A reading from “the Books against Eunomio” of St. Gregory of Nyssa, bishop.

The Apostle says: “He is generated before all creatures (Col. 1: 15), first-born among many brothers” (Rm. 8: 29), and again “the first-born of those who rise from the dead” (Col. 1: 18).

He has become the first born of those who rise from the dead, he who first has destroyed in himself the cruel pangs of death, in order to give to everyone the strength of the birth that springs forth from the resurrection. He has become the first-born among many brothers he who was the first to be generated in water, with the new generation presided by the flight of the dove. Through him, those who participate with him in that generation have been chosen as brothers, through which he has become the first-born among those who after him will be regenerated through water and the Spirit. In brief, he is the first-born in all the three generations with which the human nature is vivified: the first being the physical one, the second in the sacrament of baptism, the third in the resurrection from the dead that we hope in. Though being the head and the beginning of the double regeneration, which is carried out through baptism and the resurrection, he is the first-born also according to the flesh. First and unique, he actuated in himself through the Virgin Mary a new birth unknown to nature, one that no one else had ever realised in many generations of men. If these things were to be understood with the reason, the significance of the creature of which he is the first-born would not be ignored either. We in fact know the double creation of our nature: the first, according to which we have been formed; the second, through which we have been reformed. There would not have been need of the second creation if we had not rendered the first useless with the transgression.

It was necessary that the aged, weakened, fallen creature, should become new in Christ; in fact the Apostle says that in the second creature none of the old things must be seen anymore: “You must give up your old way of life; you must put aside your old self, which gets corrupted by following illusory desires, and clothe yourselves with the new man created according to God” (Ep. 4: 22, 24). “Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things have passed and now the new one has been born” (2Cor. 5: 17). One and identical is the Creator of the human nature, who has made it at the beginning and has remade it much later: then he had

created man from dust; the second time, assuming the dust from the Virgin, he did not simply form a man, but he formed himself. Before he had created, later he has been created; first the Word had made the flesh, later the Word became flesh in order to convert our flesh to the Spirit. Having become flesh and blood, he is a part of us. For this he is called the first-born of this new creation in Christ, leader and first fruit of all, those who are born to life, as well as those who are reborn in virtue of his resurrection from the dead, in order to govern the living and the dead, sanctifying in himself all the baptised as first fruits.

Responsorial. *1 Cor. 15: 20, 22, 21*

R: Christ has risen from the dead, first fruits of those who are dead. * And as all die in Adam, so also all receive life in Christ, alleluia.

V: Since through one man death came, so also through one man the resurrection of the dead will come.

R: And as all die in Adam, so also all receive life in Christ, alleluia.

Gospel. *Jn. 6: 30-35*

Not Moses, but my Father gave you bread from heaven.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 6:30] So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see, and believe you? What work do you perform?"

[John 6:31] Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

[John 6:32] Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven; my Father gives you the true bread from heaven.

[John 6:33] For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven, and gives life to the world."

[John 6:34] They said to him, "Lord, give us this bread always."

[John 6:35] Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.

WEDNESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Ap. 9: 1-12*

The plague of the locusts.

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

[Rev 9:1] And the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fallen from heaven to earth, and he was given the key of the shaft of the bottomless pit; [Rev 9:2] he opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft.

[Rev 9:3] Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth;

[Rev 9:4] they were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green growth or any tree, but only those of mankind who have not the seal of God upon their foreheads;

[Rev 9:5] they were allowed to torture them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torture was like the torture of a scorpion, when it stings a man.

[Rev 9:6] And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death will fly from them.

[Rev 9:7] In appearance the locusts were like horses arrayed for battle; on their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces,

[Rev 9:8] their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lions' teeth;

[Rev 9:9] they had scales like iron breastplates, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle.

[Rev 9:10] They have tails like scorpions, and stings, and their power of hurting men for five months lies in their tails.

[Rev 9:11] They have as king over them the angel of the bottomless pit; his name in Hebrew is Abad'don, and in Greek he is called Apol'lyon.

[Rev 9:12] The first woe has passed; behold, two woes are still to come.

Responsorial. *Jl. 3: 3, 5; Mk. 13: 33*

R: I will do prodigies in heaven and on earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. * Whoever will invoke the name of the Lord will be saved, alleluia.

V: Be awake, keep vigil, because you do not know when will be the moment.

R: Whoever will invoke the name of the Lord will be saved, alleluia.

Second Reading. C. 61

The bath of regeneration.

A reading from the “First Apology in favour of the Christians” of St. Justin, martyr.

I shall describe now the way in which we have consecrated ourselves to God and are made new through Christ.

Those who have been convinced and who believe that what I have been explaining to you is true and promise to live their lives accordingly, are told, while fasting, to pray and beseech God that their sins may be forgiven, and we join them in fasting and prayer.

Then we lead them to the water, and they are reborn by the same process by which we have been reborn. That is, they are bathed in the water in the name of God, the Father, and Lord of all things, of Jesus Christ our Saviour and of the Holy Spirit.

For Christ said: “unless you are born again, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven”. Now it is clear to all that those who have once been born cannot go back into the womb of the mothers who bore them.

As I have already said, the prophet Isaiah explained how sinners who repent can escape from their sins: “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; remove the evil from your souls, learn to do good; give judgement for the orphan and justice to the widow. “Come now, let us reason together”, says the Lord. “Though your sins be like scarlet, I shall make them white as wool; though they be red like crimson, I shall make them white as snow. But if you do not obey me, the sword shall devour you. The mouth of the Lord has spoken these things”.

The apostles also have taught us the same lesson. With regard to our first birth we were begotten without our knowledge or consent, by the moist seed when our parents came together; we were born into evil ways and bad habits. But to make us children of choice and understanding instead of compulsion and ignorance, and to obtain for us in the water forgiveness of

our former sins, over anyone who chooses to be born again and who repents of his sins the name of God the Father and Lord of all is pronounced; and when we lead him to the font to be baptised we pronounce over him no other name.

For no one can give a name to God, who is too great for words; if anyone dares to say that it is possible to do so, he must be suffering from an incurable madness.

This bath is called ‘the enlightening’, because the minds of those who receive this teaching become enlightened. The candidate for illumination is also baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Spirit, who through the prophets foretold everything concerning Jesus.

Responsorial. *Jn. 3: 5-6*

R: Jesus said to Nicodemus, I tell you most solemnly: * Unless a man is born through water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God, alleluia.

V: Flesh can give birth only to flesh; it is the spirit that gives birth to the spirit:

R: Unless a man is born through water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God, alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Act. 9: 23-43*

Saul to Jerusalem. Miracles of Peter.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

[Acts 9:23] When many days had passed, the Jews plotted to kill him,

[Acts 9:24] but their plot became known to Saul. They were watching the gates day and night, to kill him;

[Acts 9:25] but his disciples took him by night and let him down over the wall, lowering him in a basket.

[Acts 9:26] And when he had come to Jerusalem he attempted to join the disciples; and they were all afraid of him, for they did not believe that he was a disciple.

[Acts 9:27] But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared to them how on the road he had seen the Lord, who spoke to him, and how at Damascus he had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.

[Acts 9:28] So he went in and out among them at Jerusalem,

[Acts 9:29] preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. And he spoke and disputed against the Hellenists; but they were seeking to kill him.

[Acts 9:30] And when the brethren knew it, they brought him down to Caesare'a, and sent him off to Tarsus.

[Acts 9:31] So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Sama'ria had peace and was built up; and walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit it was multiplied.

[Acts 9:32] Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints that lived at Lydda.

[Acts 9:33] There he found a man named Aene'as, who had been bedridden for eight years and was paralyzed.

[Acts 9:34] And Peter said to him, "Aene'as, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed." And immediately he rose.

[Acts 9:35] And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

[Acts 9:36] Now there was at Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity.

[Acts 9:37] In those days she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room.

[Acts 9:38] Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him entreating him, "Please come to us without delay."

[Acts 9:39] So Peter rose and went with them. And when he had come, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping, and showing tunics and other garments which Dorcas made while she was with them.

[Acts 9:40] But Peter put them all outside and knelt down and prayed; then turning to the body he said, "Tabitha, rise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up.

[Acts 9:41] And he gave her his hand and lifted her up. Then calling the saints and widows he presented her alive.

[Acts 9:42] And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.

[Acts 9:43] And he stayed in Joppa for many days with one Simon, a tanner.

Responsorial. *Heb. 2: 3; Ex. 1: 7*

R: The salvation has been confirmed in the midst of us by those who had heard him * while God also testified to it at the same time with signs and prodigies and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Alleluia.

V: They multiplied and grew, and they become numerous and very powerful and filled the land.

R: while God also testified to it at the same time with signs and prodigies and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit. Alleluia.

Second Reading. *Book 2*

The sacred mysteries unite us to Christ.

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

Those who have passed through that which he has passed, who have worked and suffered all that he has done and suffered have the right to be united to Christ. Christ has joined and united himself, by means of flesh and blood, to those who are without sin. Though being God from the beginning, he has made divine also that which he later took on himself, that is the human nature. Finally, because of the flesh, he suffered death and has taken up again his own life.

He who desires to be united with Christ must become his companion in the flesh, and participant of his divinity, associate of his burial and resurrection. For this we are immersed in the healing waves, where we die in his death and rise in his resurrection. We are anointed in order to be associated with his royal anointing and to his divinity. Then when we eat the consecrated bread and drink the most divine chalice, we are made participants of the flesh and blood that he took on himself. In this way we unite ourselves to him who became flesh, died and was resurrected for us.

How therefore? Should we perhaps observe the same order? Not at all, but where he has finished we begin and where he has begun, there will be our end. He descended, so that we could ascend and, though the way to run being identical, he had to descend it, we must ascend it. Baptism is in fact a generation, that is, a birth. The anointing or the Chrism is in function of the operation and the progress. The bread of life and the chalice of the Eucharist, then, are the true food and the true drink. Yet you are not allowed to move or to feed before you are born. This is why the baptism has re-established man in the friendship with God; the Chrism renders man worthy of the gifts enclosed in it; the sacred table then has the power to communicate to the baptised the flesh and blood of Christ.

It is impossible, before reconciliation, to have a relationship with friends and to merit for oneself the prizes that are due to friends. It is impossible therefore that the wicked and the slaves of sin can eat the flesh and drink the blood that is offered only to him who has his heart free from all faults. Therefore, first we are washed, then anointed, and in this way pure and sweet smelling, the table awaits us.

Responsorial. *Sir. 24: 17, 18; Jn. 14: 6*

R: I like a vine have produced gracious shoots, alleluia. * Draw near to me, you who desire me, and satisfy yourselves with my products, alleluia, alleluia.

V: I am the way, the truth and the life.

R: Draw near to me, you who desire me, and satisfy yourselves with my products, alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel. *Jn. 6: 35-40*

*This is the will of the Father: that whoever sees the Son
and believes in him will have eternal life.*

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 6:35] Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.

[John 6:36] But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe.

[John 6:37] All that the Father gives me will come to me; and him who comes to me I will not cast out.

[John 6:38] For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me;

[John 6:39] and this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up at the last day.

[John 6:40] For this is the will of my Father, that every one who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

THURSDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Ap. 9: 13-21*

The plague of war.

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

[Rev 9:13] Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar before God,

[Rev 9:14] saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates."

[Rev 9:15] So the four angels were released, who had been held ready for the hour, the day, the month, and the year, to kill a third of mankind.

[Rev 9:16] The number of the troops of cavalry was twice ten thousand times ten thousand; I heard their number.

[Rev 9:17] And this was how I saw the horses in my vision: the riders wore breastplates the color of fire and of sapphire and of sulphur, and the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulphur issued from their mouths.

[Rev 9:18] By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulphur issuing from their mouths.

[Rev 9:19] For the power of the horses is in their mouths and in their tails; their tails are like serpents, with heads, and by means of them they wound.

[Rev 9:20] The rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands nor give up worshiping demons and idols of gold and silver and bronze and stone and wood, which cannot either see or hear or walk;

[Rev 9:21] nor did they repent of their murders or their sorceries or their immorality or their thefts.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Act. 17: 30, 31; Jl. 13: 14*

R: God orders all men of all places to mend their ways. * He has established a day to judge the earth with justice, alleluia.

V: Ministers of God, gather together all the inhabitants of the regions, and cry to the Lord.

R: He has established a day to judge the earth with justice, alleluia.

Second Reading. *Book 5, 2, 2-3*

The Eucharist pledge of the resurrection.

A reading from the treatise “Against the heresies” of St. Irenaeus, bishop.

If the flesh is not saved, then the Lord did not redeem us with his blood, the chalice of the Eucharist is not a share in his blood, and the bread that we break is not a share in his body. For blood cannot exist apart from veins and flesh and the rest of human substance which the Word of God truly became in order to redeem us with his blood, as his own apostle states: ‘In him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins’.

Since we are his members, and are nourished by his creation, and since he also gives us his creation, by making his sun rise and the rain fall according to his own good pleasure, he declared that the chalice of his creation is his own blood, from which he augments our own blood, and he affirmed that the bread of his creation is his own body, from which he gives growth to our bodies.

So when the mixed chalice and the baked loaf receive the word of God, and when the Eucharistic elements become the body and blood of Christ, which bring growth and sustenance to our bodily frame, how can it be maintained that our flesh is incapable of receiving God’s gift of eternal life? For our flesh feeds on the Lord’s body and blood, and is his member.

So Saint Paul writes in his letter to the Ephesians: “We are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones”: he is not speaking about some spiritual and invisible man, “for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have”; on the contrary, he is speaking of the anatomy of a real man, consisting of flesh, nerves and bones, which is nourished by his chalice, the chalice of his blood, and gains growth from the bread which is his body.

When a vine-stock is set in the ground, it bears fruit in due season; when a grain of wheat falls into the earth, it dies, only to be restored to life and multiplied by the Spirit of God, who holds all creatures in being. Then by the providence of God the grape and the vine become available for man’s use, and when they receive God’s word, they become the Eucharist, the body and blood of Christ. In the same way if our bodies are nourished by the Eucharist, after being buried in the earth and decaying there they

shall rise again in due season, when the word of God confers resurrection upon them for the glory of God the Father. For God confers immortality on what is mortal, and bestows incorruptibility on what is corruptible, because his power is made perfect in weakness.

Responsorial. *Jn. 6: 48-52*

R: I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the desert and they are dead; * this is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that a man may eat it and not die, alleluia.

V: I am the living bread that has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever;

R: this is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that a man may eat it and not die, alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Act. 10: 1-33*

Peter in the house of the centurion Cornelius.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

[Acts 10:1] At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort,

[Acts 10:2] a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms liberally to the people, and prayed constantly to God.

[Acts 10:3] About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God coming in and saying to him, "Cornelius."

[Acts 10:4] And he stared at him in terror, and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God.

[Acts 10:5] And now send men to Joppa, and bring one Simon who is called Peter;

[Acts 10:6] he is lodging with Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the seaside."

[Acts 10:7] When the angel who spoke to him had departed, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those that waited on him,

[Acts 10:8] and having related everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

[Acts 10:9] The next day, as they were on their journey and coming near the city, Peter went up on the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour.

[Acts 10:10] And he became hungry and desired something to eat; but while they were preparing it, he fell into a trance

[Acts 10:11] and saw the heaven opened, and something descending, like a great sheet, let down by four corners upon the earth.

[Acts 10:12] In it were all kinds of animals and reptiles and birds of the air.

[Acts 10:13] And there came a voice to him, "Rise, Peter; kill and eat."

[Acts 10:14] But Peter said, "No, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean."

[Acts 10:15] And the voice came to him again a second time, "What God has cleansed, you must not call common."

[Acts 10:16] This happened three times, and the thing was taken up at once to heaven.

[Acts 10:17] Now while Peter was inwardly perplexed as to what the vision which he had seen might mean, behold, the men that were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood before the gate

[Acts 10:18] and called out to ask whether Simon who was called Peter was lodging there.

[Acts 10:19] And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you.

[Acts 10:20] Rise and go down, and accompany them without hesitation; for I have sent them."

[Acts 10:21] And Peter went down to the men and said, "I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for your coming?"

[Acts 10:22] And they said, "Cornelius, a centurion, an upright and God-fearing man, who is well spoken of by the whole Jewish nation, was directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house, and to hear what you have to say."

[Acts 10:23] So he called them in to be his guests. The next day he rose and went off with them, and some of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

[Acts 10:24] And on the following day they entered Caesare'a. Cornelius was expecting them and had called together his kinsmen and close friends.

[Acts 10:25] When Peter entered, Cornelius met him and fell down at his feet and worshiped him.

[Acts 10:26] But Peter lifted him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am a man."

[Acts 10:27] And as he talked with him, he went in and found many persons gathered;

[Acts 10:28] and he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a Jew to associate with or to visit any one of another nation; but God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean.

[Acts 10:29] So when I was sent for, I came without objection. I ask then why you sent for me."

[Acts 10:30] And Cornelius said, "Four days ago, about this hour, I was keeping the ninth hour of prayer in my house; and behold, a man stood before me in bright apparel,

[Acts 10:31] saying, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God.

[Acts 10:32] Send therefore to Joppa and ask for Simon who is called Peter; he is lodging in the house of Simon, a tanner, by the seaside.'

[Acts 10:33] So I sent to you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Now therefore we are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."

Responsorial. *Ep. 3: 5-6; Col. 1: 26-27*

R: This mystery has not been manifested to the men of the previous generations, as in the present it has been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets through the Holy Spirit: * the Gentiles that is are called, in Christ Jesus to share the same inheritance and to be participants of the promises of God. Alleluia.

V: God wanted to make known the glorious richness of this mystery that is Christ Jesus amongst the pagans.

R: the Gentiles that are called, in Christ Jesus to share the same inheritance and to be participants of the promises of God. Alleluia.

Second Reading. *Tratt. 1. 7-8*

The will of Christ is proposed to us as a norm of life.

A reading from the treatise "On the ideal of the perfect Christian" of St. Gregory of Nyssa, bishop.

When we learn that redemption is the Christ who gave himself as payment in order to redeem us, we understand that he, having become the price of each and every soul, has bought us for himself from death to life,

offering us immortality and making us his possession, if therefore we belong to him who has redeemed us, we follow the Lord in such a way that we do not live anymore for ourselves but for him who has bought us at the cost of his life. In fact we are not any more masters of ourselves: the Lord is he who has bought us and we are subjected to his dominion. Let us propose therefore his will as a norm of life.

When death oppressed us with its overpowering dominion, the law of sin governed everything in us: now instead, destined for life, it is just that we are governed by the will of he who is powerful, so as not to fall again under the wicked dominion of death and to be drawn away through sin from the will of him who vivifies us.

This reflection brings us back to the Lord, hearing him defined by Paul as our Passover and priest: and the Christ immolated for us is truly our Passover and it is he again who is the priest who has offered the sacrifice to God. "He gave himself for us, offering himself to God in a sweet smelling sacrifice" (Ep. 5: 2). This is an example for us, so that, seeing Christ offering himself to God as an oblation and victim, becoming our Passover, let us also offer our bodies "as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God; this is our spiritual cult" (Rm. 12: 1). The way then of sacrificing ourselves is the following: not conforming ourselves to this age, but transforming oneself renewing the mind in order to discern the will of God, that which is good, pleasing to him and perfect (cfr. Rm. 12; 2). The loving will of God cannot be manifested in a flesh that has not been sacrificed to the law of the spirit, since "the desires of the flesh are in revolt against God because they do not submit themselves to his law" (Rm. 8: 7). Therefore, if first the believer does not offer his own flesh as a living host, mortifying the earthly members and refusing to enslave himself to their wants, he will not be able to observe the good and perfect will of God in life.

So also the fact that Christ has made himself propitiation for us in his own blood induces us also to be propitiation for ourselves, and, mortifying the members, to make our souls immortal.

When Christ is said to be the "radiant light of God's glory and the perfect copy of his nature" (Heb. 1: 3), in these words we understand with the mind how much his majesty is adorable. Paul in fact, illuminated by the Holy Spirit and instructed directly by God, had probed in the abyss of richness of wisdom and science of God the hidden secrets of the divine mysteries; and, feeling himself incapable of expressing with the tongue the

splendour of the things that cannot be inquired into and investigated and even though they had been shown to him divinely, in order to make those who welcomed his knowledge of the mystery understand, he indicated them with various images, saying all that his language at the service of thought could explain.

Responsorial. *Heb. 13: 21; 2 Mac. 1: 4*

R: The Lord will make you perfect in every good, so that you may fulfil his will, * operating in you that which is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ, alleluia.

V: he will give you a mind that is open to understand his laws and commandments,

R: operating in you that which is pleasing to him through Jesus Christ, alleluia.

Gospel. *Jn. 6: 44-51*

I am the living bread, come down from heaven.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 6:44] No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.

[John 6:45] It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Every one who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me.

[John 6:46] Not that any one has seen the Father except him who is from God; he has seen the Father.

[John 6:47] Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life.

[John 6:48] I am the bread of life.

[John 6:49] Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.

[John 6:50] This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat of it and not die.

[John 6:51] I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh."

FRIDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Ap. 10: 1-11*

“You still have to prophecy over many people...”

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

[Rev 10:1] Then I saw another mighty angel coming down from heaven, wrapped in a cloud, with a rainbow over his head, and his face was like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire.

[Rev 10:2] He had a little scroll open in his hand. And he set his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land,

[Rev 10:3] and called out with a loud voice, like a lion roaring; when he called out, the seven thunders sounded.

[Rev 10:4] And when the seven thunders had sounded, I was about to write, but I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Seal up what the seven thunders have said, and do not write it down."

[Rev 10:5] And the angel whom I saw standing on sea and land lifted up his right hand to heaven

[Rev 10:6] and swore by him who lives for ever and ever, who created heaven and what is in it, the earth and what is in it, and the sea and what is in it, that there should be no more delay,

[Rev 10:7] but that in the days of the trumpet call to be sounded by the seventh angel, the mystery of God, as he announced to his servants the prophets, should be fulfilled.

[Rev 10:8] Then the voice which I had heard from heaven spoke to me again, saying, "Go, take the scroll which is open in the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land."

[Rev 10:9] So I went to the angel and told him to give me the little scroll; and he said to me, "Take it and eat; it will be bitter to your stomach, but sweet as honey in your mouth."

[Rev 10:10] And I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it; it was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it my stomach was made bitter.

[Rev 10:11] And I was told, "You must again prophesy about many peoples and nations and tongues and kings."

Responsorial. *Cfr. Ap. 10: 7; Mt. 24: 30*

R: The trumpet will sound and the mystery of God will be accomplished, *
as he announced to his servants, the prophets, alleluia.

V: Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the heavens, and they
will see him coming on the clouds of heaven with great power and glory,

R: as he announced to his servants, the prophets, alleluia.

Second Reading. Disc. On the Lord, 3-4, 9

The cross of Christ, salvation of the world.

A reading from the “Discourses” of St. Ephraim, deacon.

Our Lord was trodden underfoot by death, and in turn trod upon death as upon a road. He submitted to death and endured it of his own free will, in order to destroy death against death’s will. For our Lord went out carrying his cross, according to death’s wish; he cried out on the cross and led the dead out from hell, against death’s wish.

Death killed him through the body that he bore; the same body was the weapon with which he conquered death. His divinity was hidden beneath his humanity and came to death, which killed him and itself was killed. Death killed his natural life, but in its turn his supernatural life killed death.

And so, since death could not devour him without a body and the world of the dead could not swallow him up without flesh, he came to the Virgin, so that he might receive from her a chariot on which to ride to the underworld. In the body he had assumed he entered death’s domain, broke open its strong room and scattered the treasure.

And so he came to Eve, the mother of all the living. She is the vineyard whose hedge death opened by Eve’s own hands so that she might taste death’s fruit. Thus Eve, the mother of all the living, became the source of death for all the living.

But Mary blossomed, the new vine compared with the old vine, Eve. Christ, the new life, lived in her, so that when death, brazen as ever, approached her in search of his prey, life, the bane of death, was hidden within her mortal fruit. And so when death, suspecting nothing, swallowed him up, death set life free, and with life a multitude of men.

This glorious son of the carpenter, who set up his cross above the all-consuming world of the dead, led the human race into the abode of life. Because through the tree the human race had fallen into the regions below, he crossed over on the tree of the cross into the abode of life. The bitter shoot had been grafted on to the tree, and now the sweet shoot was grafted on to it so that we might recognise the one whom no creature can resist.

Glory to you! You built your cross as a bridge over death, so that departed souls might pass from the realm of death to the realm of life.

Glory to you! You put on the body of a mortal man and made it the source of life for all mortal men.

You are alive! Your murderers handled your life like farmers: they sowed it like grain deep in the earth, for it to spring up and raise with itself a multitude of men.

Come, let us offer him the great, universal sacrifice of our love, and pour out before him our richest hymns and prayers. For he offered his cross to God as a sacrifice in order to make us all rich.

Responsorial. *1 Cor. 15: 55-56; cf. 2 Cor. 4: 13, 14*

R: Death, where is your victory? Death, where is your sting? Now the sting of death is sin, * but let us thank God for giving us victory over sin through our Lord Jesus Christ, alleluia.

V: We have the Spirit of faith, and we believe that he who raised the Lord Jesus to life will raise us with Jesus in our turn;

R: but let us thank God for giving us victory over sin through our Lord Jesus Christ, alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Act. 10: 34- 11: 4, 18*

The descent of the Holy Spirit on Cornelius.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

[Acts 10:34] And Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I perceive that God shows no partiality,

[Acts 10:35] but in every nation any one who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.

[Acts 10:36] You know the word which he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace by Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all),

[Acts 10:37] the word which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism which John preached:

[Acts 10:38] how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

[Acts 10:39] And we are witnesses to all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree;

[Acts 10:40] but God raised him on the third day and made him manifest;

[Acts 10:41] not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead.

[Acts 10:42] And he commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead.

[Acts 10:43] To him all the prophets bear witness that every one who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

[Acts 10:44] While Peter was still saying this, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.

[Acts 10:45] And the believers from among the circumcised who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles.

[Acts 10:46] For they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared,

[Acts 10:47] "Can any one forbid water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?"

[Acts 10:48] And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.

CHAPTE

R 11

[Acts 11:1] Now the apostles and the brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.

[Acts 11:2] So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcision party criticized him,

[Acts 11:3] saying, "Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?"

[Acts 11:4] But Peter began and explained to them in order:

[Acts 11:18] When they heard this they were silenced. And they glorified God, saying, "Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance unto life."

Responsorial. *Act. 10: 40-41; 2: 32*

R: God allowed him to appear not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen by God, to us * who ate and drank with him after his resurrection from the dead. Alleluia.

V: This Jesus God has resurrected and all of us are witnesses

R: who ate and drank with him after his resurrection from the dead. Alleluia.

Second Reading. *Disc. On the baptism of Christ.
The new life.*

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

When our God and Saviour fulfilled the work of our redemption, he went under the earth in order to make life spring forth. We, receiving baptism in imitation of our Lord, our master and guide, do not bury ourselves inside the earth (this in fact serves to cover a dead body and provides for the weakness and corruption of our nature), but we use another similar element, that is water, and we hide ourselves in it, like the Saviour in the earth; and we do this three times to represent the grace of the resurrection on the third day; and we do this not with a silent rite, but while over us is invoked the names of the three divine persons, in whom we believe, in whom we hope, from whom our present and future existence comes.

What is the command of the Lord? “Baptise them” that is immersing them “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt. 28: 19). Why in the name of the Father? Because he is the beginning of all things. Why in the Son? Because he is the operator of creation. Why in the Holy Spirit? Because he brings everything to perfection.

We submit ourselves therefore to the Father, in order to be sanctified, we submit ourselves to the Son, for the same reason; we submit ourselves to the Holy Spirit also, in order to become like Him, that is holy. There is no difference of sanctification, almost as if the Father sanctifies more, the Son

less, and the Holy Spirit even less than both of them. Why do you divide those three persons into different natures, and make of them three Gods different among themselves, while you receive from all of them the same identical grace?

If you had perhaps fallen a prisoner of the enemies, and you were living in sad slavery longing for the primitive freedom, and if suddenly three of your acquaintances and fellow citizens were to arrive and they were to ransom you paying an equal part, would you not hold all three of them as your equal benefactors and would you not give back to them then impartially that which in full agreement they had spent for you?

All of you who have been adorned with the gift of regeneration and who glory in the renewed health, let me see after the sacramental grace the change of habits, and let the transformation in better be known through the purity of life. Certainly nothing of that which falls under the eye changes, the characteristics of the body remains the same and the natural conformation does not change. Yet there is need of an evident demonstration that makes the new man known, so that we can distinguish with evident signs the new man from the old. I think that these are the deliberate movements of the soul, through which it detaches itself from the old habits, puts itself in a new life, shows clearly to its acquaintances that it has become something else, and does not conserve anymore the sign of that which it was before. The transformation will therefore be like this, if you want to follow as a norm my words. Before baptism there was a dissolute man, greedy, rapacious, offensive, liar, slanderer and with other similar vices. Now you become modest, sober, content with your belongings, on the contrary generous and one who helps the poor, sincere, respectful, kind in speaking and in the exercise of all praiseworthy activities. Since as with the light the darkness disappears and the black is not seen anymore when it is painted in white, so also the old man disappears when he adorns himself with the works of justice. Do you see how Zaccheus also changing life made the publican die, giving back four times to those whom he had unjustly damaged? The rest he then divided with the poor, and it was that money that he had treasured evilly exploiting the poor. The evangelist Matthew, also a publican and colleague of Zaccheus, as soon as he was called, changed life as one would change a mask. Paul the persecutor but later apostle, carried heavy chains for Christ, in penance and expiation for having unjustly enchained the Christians. Such should be the rebirth: to

break of the habits of sin and to live as children of God, since we have become this through the grace of baptism.

Responsorial. *Jn. 3: 5-6*

R: Jesus said to Nicodemus: Truly, truly I say to you, * if one is not born from water and from the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God, alleluia.

V: That which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born from the Spirit, is Spirit;

R: if one is not born from water and from the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God, alleluia.

Gospel. *Jn. 6: 52-59*

My flesh is true food and my blood true drink.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 6:52] The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

[John 6:53] So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you;

[John 6:54] he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

[John 6:55] For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

[John 6:56] He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.

[John 6:57] As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me.

[John 6:58] This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live for ever."

[John 6:59] This he said in the synagogue, as he taught at Caper'na-um.

SATURDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *Ap. 11: 1-19*

The two Witnesses and the judgement of God.

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

[Rev 11:1] Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told: "Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there,

[Rev 11:2] but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for it is given over to the nations, and they will trample over the holy city for forty-two months.

[Rev 11:3] And I will grant my two witnesses power to prophesy for one thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth."

[Rev 11:4] These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands which stand before the Lord of the earth.

[Rev 11:5] And if any one would harm them, fire pours out from their mouth and consumes their foes; if any one would harm them, thus he is doomed to be killed.

[Rev 11:6] They have power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.

[Rev 11:7] And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that ascends from the bottomless pit will make war upon them and conquer them and kill them,

[Rev 11:8] and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which is allegorically called Sodom and Egypt, where their Lord was crucified.

[Rev 11:9] For three days and a half men from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb,

[Rev 11:10] and those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth.

[Rev 11:11] But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those

who saw them.

[Rev 11:12] Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up hither!" And in the sight of their foes they went up to heaven in a cloud.

[Rev 11:13] And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

[Rev 11:14] The second woe has passed; behold, the third woe is soon to come.

[Rev 11:15] Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever."

[Rev 11:16] And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God,

[Rev 11:17] saying, "We give thanks to thee, Lord God Almighty, who art and who wast, that thou hast taken thy great power and begun to reign.

[Rev 11:18] The nations raged, but thy wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, for rewarding thy servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear thy name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth."

[Rev 11:19] Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and the ark of his covenant was seen within his temple; and there were flashes of lightning, voices, peals of thunder, an earthquake, and heavy hail.

Responsorial. *Ap. 11: 15; cfr. Dn. 7: 27*

R: The kingdom of the world belongs to our Lord and to his Christ: * he will reign forever and ever, alleluia.

V: His kingdom will be eternal: the powers of the earth will serve and obey him;

R: he will reign forever and ever, alleluia.

Second Reading. *Lett. 137, 16*

We are awaiting the eternal happiness of the heavenly city.

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

Christ therefore has come; in his birth, in his life, in his words and actions, in his passion, death, resurrection and ascension, is fulfilled all that was foretold by the prophets. He sent the Holy Spirit and filled the faithful, gathered together in the same place, in persevering expectation and full of desire for the promised Comforter.

Full of the Holy Spirit, they begin immediately to speak in the languages of all the peoples, to refute courageously the errors, they preach the truth that brings to salvation, they exhort to penance for the faults of the past life, they promise the benevolence of the divine grace. The respective signs and miracles follow the preaching of piety and of the true religion. The fury of the unbelievers broke out against them, but they bore all that had been foretold to them, hoped for that which had been promised to them, taught all that had been entrusted to them. They spread in a small number through the entire world, with marvellous facility they convert the people, in the midst of enemies they increase, with the persecution they grow, and through the anguish of their afflictions they extend till the ends of the earth. From illiterate, coarse and few that they were, they are illuminated, made noble, multiplied, revealing their illustrious intelligence and being learned orators; and, in their turn, submitting to Christ the marvellous talents of other genial men, orators, doctors, transforming them into preachers of salvation.

In the alternating of the adversity and prosperity they vigilantly exercise patience and soberness. When the world goes towards its decline, and attests with its decadence the drawing near of the end, they find greater reason for trust- since even this had been foretold- to await the eternal happiness of the heavenly city.

In the meantime, the wicked nations without faith fume against the Church of Christ. The Church overcomes them suffering, and professing, in the midst of the rage of the adversaries, its unfailing faith.

The new sacrifice, that was so long hidden under the mystical veils of revelation and the promises, having taken over, the ancient sacrifices, that were a figure of it, decay together with the wall of the destroyed temple. The same Jewish people, rejected for their disbelief and uprooted from their homeland, are dispersed throughout the world, and will carry with them everywhere the sacred books. In a way that the witness of the prophecy on Christ and on the Church will be spread by his own adversaries, whose

disbelief is foretold: so that no one can say that it is us who fabricates it at the opportune moment.

Always in conformity to the prophecy, the temples also, the simulacrum of the demons and the sacrilegious rites are destroyed, little by little. The heresies against the name of Christ, masked under the veil of his own name, seem, in order to put to the test the doctrine of the holy religion, as he himself had pre-announced.

All these things, as it is read that they have been foretold, are seen to be fulfilled, while of all the rest that remain the fulfilment is awaited.

What mind, eager for eternity and deluded by the brevity of this present life, dares to contend with the light and the summit of this divine authority?

Responsorial. *Ap. 21: 1, 2, 12, 14*

R: I saw a new heaven and a new earth, and the holy city also, the New Jerusalem, coming down from heaven, from God. * On its doors are the twelve angels. Alleluia.

V: The walls of the city rest on twelve bases, on top of which are the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

R: On its doors are the twelve angels. Alleluia.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *Act. 11: 19-30*

Foundation of the Church in Antioch.

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles.

[Acts 11:19] Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to none except Jews.

[Acts 11:20] But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus.

[Acts 11:21] And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number that believed turned to the Lord.

[Acts 11:22] News of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch.

[Acts 11:23] When he came and saw the grace of God, he was glad; and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose;

[Acts 11:24] for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a large company was added to the Lord.

[Acts 11:25] So Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul;

[Acts 11:26] and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church, and taught a large company of people; and in Antioch the disciples were for the first time called Christians.

[Acts 11:27] Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.

[Acts 11:28] And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world; and this took place in the days of Claudius.

[Acts 11:29] And the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brethren who lived in Judea;

[Acts 11:30] and they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Act. 11: 20-21; 4: 33*

R: They announced the Lord Jesus and the hand of the Lord was with them;
* thus a great number believed and were converted to the Lord, alleluia, alleluia.

V: With great strength the apostles bore witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus;

R: thus a great number believed and were converted to the Lord, alleluia, alleluia.

Second Reading. *Tratt. 1, 8-9*

The Christian is another Christ.

A reading from the Treatise “On the ideal of the perfect Christian” of St. Gregory of Nyssa, bishop.

Paul has known more profoundly than all the others who Christ was and, from the things that he himself bore, he declared how he who receives the name from Christ should be: he imitated him in fact with so much faithfulness so as to show reproduced in himself the Lord. To the point that,

through the most diligent imitation, he transformed his soul into the divine model in such a way that it did not seem to be Paul anymore who spoke, but Christ, as he himself said, who knew exactly the good that was in him: “You want proof, you say, that it is Christ who is speaking in me” (2 Cor. 13: 3), know that “it is not anymore I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2: 20).

Moreover he has also uncovered for us the strength that this name of Christ has, calling Christ the power and wisdom of God, saying that he is the peace and inaccessible light in whom God dwells; he is our expiation and redemption, high priest, Passover and propitiation of the souls, splendour of the glory of God and impression of his substance, creator of the world, spiritual food and drink, rock and water, foundation of the faith, corner stone and image of the invisible God, strong God, head of the Church his body and first born of the new creation, first fruits of those who have fallen asleep in peace and first born from the dead; first born among many brothers, mediator between God and men, only begotten Son crowned with glory and honour, Lord of glory, beginning of the creation and king of justice, therefore king of peace, king of the whole universe, who possesses the supremacy of a kingdom that cannot be circumscribed. They call him with these and other names of this kind, in such a great copy, that it is not easy to express them with a simple number. If then we draw near and connect the various meanings, they reveal to us the marvellous power of this name and they show us, in the measure in which we are capable to understand with the soul and the mind, that majesty of Christ that words cannot explain.

If therefore the goodness of the Lord has communicated to us the name that is greater and more divine than any other name that exists, in a way that, calling ourselves Christians, we are honoured with the name of Christ, it is necessary that all the names that define him should be seen expressed in us also, so that we may not seem to be falsely called Christians, but may give witness to this name with the life.

Responsorial. *Ps. 5: 12; 88: 16-17*

R: All those who take refuge in you rejoice and exult without end. * You protect them and in you all those who love your name rejoice, alleluia.

V: They walk, Lord, in the light of your face: they exult all day in your name,

R: You protect them and in you all those who love your name rejoice, alleluia.

Gospel. *Jn. 6: 60-69*

To whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life.

A reading from the Gospel of St. John.

[John 6:60] Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?"

[John 6:61] But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples murmured at it, said to them, "Do you take offense at this?"

[John 6:62] Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before?

[John 6:63] It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.

[John 6:64] But there are some of you that do not believe." For Jesus knew from the first who those were that did not believe, and who it was that would betray him.

[John 6:65] And he said, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."

[John 6:66] After this many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him.

[John 6:67] Jesus said to the twelve, "Do you also wish to go away?"

[John 6:68] Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life;

[John 6:69] and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God."