

THE COMMON OFFICES.

THE DEDICATION OF A CHURCH.

First Reading: *1 Pet 2: 1 – 17.*

The spiritual building made of living stones.

A Reading from the first letter of St Peter.

So put away all malice and all guile and insincerity and envy and all slander. Like newborn babes, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation; for you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.

Come to him, to that living stone, rejected by men but in God's sight chosen and precious; and like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and he who believes in him will not be put to shame."

To you therefore who believe, he is precious, but for those who do not believe, "The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner," and "A stone that will make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall"; for they stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.

Beloved, I beseech you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh that wage war against your soul.

Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles, so that in case they speak against you as wrongdoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.

Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right.

For it is God's will that by doing right you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men. Live as free men, yet without using your freedom as a pretext for evil; but live as servants of God.

Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the emperor.

Responsorial: *cf Tob. 13: 21; Rev 21: 19-21*

R: All your walls are precious stones, O Jerusalem,* and your towers shall be built of jewels. (P.T. Alleluia)

V: Your gates, O Jerusalem, shall be built of sapphire and emerald, and your surrounding wall of precious stone,*

R: and your towers shall be built of jewels. (P.T. Alleluia).

Or: During Lent

First Reading: *1 Kgs. 8: 1-4; 10-13; 22-30*

Prayer of Solomon in the temple.

A reading from the First Book of Kings.

Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the fathers' houses of the people of Israel, before King Solomon in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion. And all the men of Israel assembled to King Solomon at the feast in the month Eth'anim, which is the seventh month. And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark. And they brought up the ark of the LORD, the tent of meeting, and all the holy vessels that were in the tent; the priests and the Levites brought them up.

And when the priests came out of the holy place, a cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.

Then Solomon said, "The LORD has set the sun in the heavens, but has said that he would dwell in thick darkness. I have built you an exalted house, a place for you to dwell in for ever."

Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven; and said, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart; who have kept with your servant David my father what you did declare to him; yes, you did speak with your mouth, and with your hand have fulfilled it this day. Now

therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, keep with your servant David my father what you have promised him, saying, 'There shall never fail you a man before me to sit upon the throne of Israel, if only your sons take heed to their way, to walk before me as you have walked before me.' Now therefore, O God of Israel, let your word be confirmed, which you have spoken to your servant David my father. "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you; how much less this house which I have built! Yet have regard to the prayer of your servant and to his supplication, O LORD my God, hearkening to the cry and to the prayer which your servant prays before you this day; that your eyes may be open night and day toward this house, the place of which you have said, 'My name shall be there,' that you may hearken to the prayer which your servant offers toward this place. And hearken to the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place; yes, hear you in heaven your dwelling place; and when you hear, forgive.

Responsorial. *Mt. 18: 19-20; 2 Chr. 7: 15*

R: Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. * For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

V: My eyes are open and my ears are attentive to the prayers said in this place.

R: For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them,

Or. During Passover.

First Reading. *Ap. 21: 9-27*

Vision of the Heavenly Jerusalem.

A reading from the Book of Apocalypse.

Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb."

And in the Spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal.

It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed; on the east three gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

And he who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its breadth; and he measured the city with his rod, twelve thousand stadia; its length and breadth and height are equal. He also measured its wall, a hundred and forty-four cubits by a man's measure, that is, an angel's. The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass.

The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst.

And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass.

And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb.

By its light shall the nations walk; and the kings of the earth shall bring their glory into it, and its gates shall never be shut by day -- and there shall be no night there; they shall bring into it the glory and the honour of the nations. But nothing unclean shall enter it, nor any one who practices abomination or falsehood, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Ap. 21: 21; Tob. 13: 18, 13*

R: Your squares, Jerusalem, will be paved with pure gold, hymns of joy will resound in you, * and in all your houses they will sing: alleluia.

V: You will shine with splendid light; to you will come and will prostrate all the nations of the earth;

R: and in all your houses they will sing: alleluia.

Second Reading. *Hom. 9: 1-2*

Like living stones you are being built into the temple and altar of God.
A reading from the “Homilies on Joshua the son of Nun” of Origen, presbyter.

All of us who believe in Christ Jesus are said to be living stones according to the statement of Scripture when it says, ‘ Like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.’(1 Pet. 2: 5)

We have learnt to notice in the case of material stones, that those which are stronger and more powerful are placed first in the foundations, so that the weight of the whole building can be put securely on them. Similarly you must understand that from among these living stones there are some in the foundations of this spiritual building. Now who are those who are laid in the foundations? The apostles and the prophets. This is what Paul himself has to say in his teaching, ‘You are built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone.’ (Ep. 2: 20)

You must learn that Christ also himself is the foundation of the building which we are now describing, so that you may more eagerly prepare yourself for the construction of his building and be found to be one of those stones which are closer to the foundation. For these are the words of Paul the apostle, ‘ For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus.’ (1 Cor. 3: 11) Blessed therefore are those who will be found to have constructed sacred and religious buildings upon that glorious foundation.

But in this building of the Church there must also be an altar. From this I conclude that whichever of you ‘ living stones’ are ready for this and prepared to give up time to prayers, to offer entreaties to God day and night and to offer up the sacrifices of supplication, such people I say are the stones out of which Jesus builds his altar.

Study now what praise is offered to these same stones of the altar. ‘ Moses the lawgiver,’ he said, ‘ ordered that an altar be built out of unhewn stones, untouched by the chisel.’ Who now are these unhewn stones? Perhaps these unhewn stones, unviolated stones could be the holy apostles, all making together one altar by reason of their harmony and concord. For so it is reported of them that, as all prayed together with one accord and opened their mouths, they said, ‘You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men.’ (Act. 1: 24)

These men therefore who were able to pray with one mind, with one voice, with one voice in one spirit, are perhaps worthy of being all employed to build together one altar upon which Jesus may offer sacrifice to the Father.

However let us too try to take care that we may all with one mind say the same things, having the same sentiments, doing nothing in strife nor through vainglory, but remaining with one feeling, one sentiment, in the hope that we too can be made fitting stones for the altar.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Is. 2: 2, 3; Ps. 125: 6*

R: The house of the Lord is set upon the heights of the mountains and towers over all the hills.* All the nations will come to it and say, Glory to you, O Lord!

V: They will come, they will come to it, full of song, carrying their sheaves.

A: All the nations will come to it and say, Glory to you, O Lord!

Or.

Second Reading. *Disc. 336: 1, 6*

Construction and dedication of the temple of God in us.

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

The thronging crowd of this congregation is the dedication of a house of prayer. The house of our prayers is the one before our eyes, but we ourselves are the house of God. If we ourselves are the house of God, we are being built up in this age, that at the end of the age we may be dedicated. A building, or rather the process of building, involves hard work, a dedication means exultation.

What was happening here when that church of yours was rising has its counterpart when those who believe in Christ are brought together. By becoming Christians they are like stones newly quarried on the mountains or timber felled in the forests. When they are catechized, baptized, formed,

they are, as it were, hewn at the hands of workers and craftsmen, they are set in line and evened up.

Nevertheless they do not make a house of God unless they are cemented together by love. If those beams of wood and those stones of the church were not joined to one another in a definite pattern, if they were not peacefully intertwined, if they did not by mutual attachment in a certain sense ‘love’ one another, no one would dare to put a foot inside. In a word, when you see the stones and wood in any building securely fastened to each other, you enter there without dread, you fear no collapse.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, wishing to enter and dwell in us, used to say as though by way of building, ‘A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another.’ (Jn. 13: 34) ‘A commandment,’ he says, ‘I give you.’ You were lying in ruins, decrepit, no house for me. To be rescued from your state of ruin, you must now love one another.

Let your love then consider that this house of yours, as was foretold and promised, is up to now being built in the whole world. For when the house of the Lord was being built after the Exile, as another psalm has it, it was said, ‘O sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord all the earth.’ (cf. Ps. 149: 1). In that place ‘a new song’ was spoken of: here the Lord said ‘a new commandment’. What could a new song produce except new love? Singing is characteristic of a lover. The voice of this singer has the fervour of sacred love.

There what we here see accomplished materially in these walls, let that be carried out spiritually in our minds; and what we see perfected in stones and timber, let that be brought to completion in our bodies, with the help of God’s grace as a builder.

Above all, therefore let us give thanks to the Lord our God, from whom comes every good endowment and every perfect gift, and let us praise his goodness with all the eagerness of our heart. For in order to build this house of prayer he has visited the mind of his faithful people, he has stirred their affection, he has granted help: he has inspired those not yet willing to be willing, he has aided the efforts of the goodwill to carry it into action. In this way God ‘who works in his own people both to will and to work for his good pleasure’, has himself begun all these activities and himself completed them.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Ps. 83: 2-3,5*

R: How lovely is your dwelling place, Lord, God of hosts! * My soul is longing for the courts of the Lord.

V: They are happy who dwell in your house, O Lord, forever singing your praise,

R: My soul is longing for the courts of the Lord.

Or. In the church dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary

Second Reading. *Disc. 9*

*New in the body and in the soul we celebrate in a new way
the day of the dedication of the most pure mother of God.*

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

THE COMMON OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

THE

FIRST

READING

Is 7: 10-14; 8: 10; 11:1-9

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

Immanuel, King of peace.

RESPONSARY

cf Is

7:10; 9:6,7

R A virgin shall conceive and bear a son, * and he shall be called Wonderful, God Almighty.

V He shall sit on the throne of David and rule over his kingdom forever, * and he shall be called...

Alternative

Gal

3: 22 – 4: 7

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Galatians

Through faith we are sons and heirs of God.

RESPONSARY

Gal 4:

4-5; Eph 2: 4; Rom 8:3

R Behold, the appointed time is here : God has sent his own Son into the world, born of a woman, born under the law,* to redeem those under the law.

V For the great love he bore us, God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh,* to redeem those under the law.

THE

SECOND

READING

Or 2, 21 -22.26

A reading from the sermons of St Sophronius

The blessing of the Father shone upon men through Mary

‘ Hail, O favoured one, the Lord is with you.’ Could anything transcend the joy that is yours, O Virgin Mother? Could anything surpass this grace granted by God to you alone? Is it possible to think of anything more gratifying and more splendid? Nothing can even approach the marvel that we see in you. All things lie far below the grace that is yours; in comparison

even the best of them take second place and their brilliance is overshadowed.

‘The Lord is with you’ and who has dared to strive against you? God has been born of you ; who would stand in your way and not gladly give you first place and supremacy? For this reason, when I contemplate the privileges that put you above all creatures I cry out to you in highest praise, ‘Hail, O favoured one, the Lord is with you’ The joy that comes from you is shared not only by mankind but also by the powers of heaven.

Truly, ‘you are blessed among women’ for you have changed the condemnation of Eve into a blessing. Because of you and through you, Adam who hitherto was cast down and condemned, received a blessing.

Truly, ‘ you are blessed among women’, for through you the blessing of the Father came to mankind and reprieved them from the age-old sentence.

Truly, ‘you are blessed among women’, because through you your ancestors found salvation. You were to give birth to the Saviour who would win for them God’s salvation.

Truly, ‘ you are blessed among women’ , for without the seed of man you bore the fruit that gives a blessing to the whole earth and frees it from being condemned to produce only thorns.

Truly, ‘you are blessed among women’ , for though you are a woman like any other woman you will in actual fact become the mother of God. If the one to be born of you is in truth God incarnate, you rightly deserve to be called ‘she who gave birth to God’, inasmuch as you truly do give birth to God.

You have God enclosed within your womb. He lives in you according to the flesh and comes forth from you like a bridegroom, giving joy to all and sharing his divine light with all mankind.

In you, O Virgin, as in the clear brightness of heaven, God, ‘has placed his tent’, and he ‘will come forth from you like a bridegroom from his chamber’. Like a giant he will run the course of his life to bring salvation to all living things. That course ‘will stretch from one end of the heavens to the other’ filling all things with the life giving warmth of God’s radiance.

RESPONSARY:

R You are truly blessed among women, for you have changed Eve’s condemnation into a blessing; * through you the Father’s favour was bestowed on all mankind.

V Through you your ancestors find salvation ; * through you the Father's favour...

Alternative

Sermon 20

A reading from the sermons of Aelred of Rievaulx

Mary our Mother

Let us come to his bride, let us come to his mother, let us come to the best of his handmaidens. All of these descriptions fit Blessed Mary.

But what are we to do for her? What sort of gifts shall we offer her? O that we might at least repay to her the debt we owe her! We owe her honour, we owe her devotion, we owe her love, we owe her praise. We owe her honour because she is the Mother of our Lord. He who does not honour the mother, will without doubt dishonour the son. Besides, scripture says: 'Honour your father and your mother.'

What then shall we say, brethren ? Is she not our mother? Certainly, brethren, she is in truth our mother. Through her we are born, not to the world but to God.

We all, as you believe and know, were in death, in the infirmity of old age, in darkness, in misery. In death because we had lost the Lord ; in the infirmity of old age, because we were in corruption ; in darkness because we had lost the light of wisdom, and so we had altogether perished.

But through Blessed Mary, we all underwent a much better birth than though Eve, inasmuch as Christ was born of Mary. Instead of the infirmity of age we have regained youth, instead of corruption incorruption, instead of darkness light.

She is our mother, mother of our life, of our incorruption, of our light. The Apostle says of our Lord, ' Whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification and redemption.'

She therefore who is the mother of Christ is the mother of our wisdom, mother of our righteousness, mother of our sanctification, mother of our redemption. Therefore she is more our mother than the mother of our flesh. Better therefore is our birth which we derive from Mary, for from her is our

holiness, our wisdom, our righteousness, our sanctification, our redemption.

Scripture says, ‘ Praise the Lord in his saints’. If our Lord is to be praised in those saints through whom he performs mighty works and miracles, how much more should he be praised in her in whom he fashioned himself, he who is wonderful beyond all wonder.

RESPONSARY

R Blessed is the holy Virgin Mary, and most worthy of all praise ;* through her has risen the Sun of Justice, Christ our God, by whom we are saved and redeemed.

V Let us joyfully celebrate this feast of the Blessed Virgin Mary. * Through her has risen...

Alternative

Nn 61-62

A reading from the Constitution on the Church of the Second Vatican Council

The Motherhood of our Lady in the economy of grace

RESPONSARY

R I know not how to praise you, holy and immaculate Virgin. * Heaven itself cannot contain the One whom you bore in your womb.

V Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. * Heaven itself cannot contain...

MEMORIA OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY ON SATURDAY

On ordinary Saturdays Through the Year on which optional Memorias are allowed, an optional Memoria of the Blessed Virgin Mary may be celebrated.

The First Reading with its responsary are from the current Saturday.

The Second Reading may be taken from the Common of the Blessed Virgin Mary, or from the following, or from the current Saturday, with their responsaries.

THE SECOND READING
On the Nativity : 1-2

A reading from a sermon by St Proclus of Constantinople

The lover of men was made man, born of the Virgin

‘Let the heavens rejoice from above, and let the clouds rain down justice, because the Lord has had pity on his people.’ Let the heavens rejoice from above, for when they were being created from the beginning, Adam too was formed by the creator from the virgin soil, and appeared as the friend and intimate of God. Let the heavens rejoice from above for the earth has now been sanctified by the Incarnation of our Lord in the flesh, and mankind has been freed from the sacrifices of idolatry. Let the clouds pour down justice, because today Eve’s fault has been taken away and forgiven by the Virgin Mary’s purity, and by him who was born of her, he who is at the same time God and man. Today Adam, after the ancient condemnation, was freed from the dread sentence of night.

Christ then, according to his own good pleasure, was born of the Virgin, from whom he took flesh by the ordering of divine providence : ‘ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us’; and the Virgin therefore became the Mother of God. The Virgin therefore is a mother, because without male seed she brought forth the incarnate Word ; in such a way however, that she retained her virginity because of the miraculous birth of him who willed it thus. She is mother of the Divine Word according to the substance of human nature, for he was made flesh in her, and appeared among us and was made one in her, in accordance with the wisdom and will of him who works marvels. ‘Of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ’, as Blessed Paul says.

For he was, as he now is, such as he will be and remain ; for our sake however he became man; the lover of men became man, what he had not been before; but he became man, at the same time remaining God without any change. He therefore became like me for me ; he became what he was not retaining however what he had been. Finally he became man, that he

might make our sufferings his own, and render us fit for adoption as sons, and grant us that kingdom, for which indeed may the grace and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ make us worthy , to whom with the Father and the Holy Spirit is glory, honour and power, now and for ever and through unending ages. Amen.

RESPONSARY

Ps 71: 6: 19 ;

Rev 21: 3

R He shall descend like the rain on the meadow,* and the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of God.

V God has pitched his tent among men and he will dwell with them. God himself who is among them shall be their God, * and the whole earth...

Alternative

Ser

mon 47:2-4

A reading from the sermons of Blessed Abbot Guerric

Mary, Mother of Christ and Mother of Christians

Mary bore only one son. In heaven, he is the only-begotten of the Father; on earth, likewise, he is the only-begotten of his Mother. She who is the only Virgin-Mother, she who glories in having borne the only-begotten of the Father, embraces that same only-begotten of hers in all his members so she can truly be called mother of all in whom she sees that Christ her Son has been formed or is being formed.

The first Eve is not so much a mother as a stepmother since she handed on to her children an inheritance of certain death rather than the beginning of light. She is indeed called the mother of all the living, but she turned out to be more precisely the murderer of the living, or mother of the dead, since the only fruit of her childbearing was death. And as Eve was incapable of fulfilling the vocation of her title, Mary consummated the mystery. She herself, like the Church of which she is the type, is a mother of all who are reborn to life.

She is in fact the mother of the Life by which everyone lives, and when she brought it forth from herself she in some way brought to rebirth all

those who were to live by that Life.

Thus the blessed Mother of Christ, knowing that she is the mother of all Christians by reason of this mystery, shows herself a mother by her care and loving attention. For her heart is not hardened against these children as if they were not her own; her womb carried a child once only, yet it remains ever fruitful; never ceasing to bring forth the fruits of her motherly compassion.

In short, if the servant of Christ by his care and heartfelt tenderness bears his little children again and again until Christ be formed in them, how much more is this true of the very Mother of Christ? Paul begot his children by preaching the word of truth through which they were born again ; but Mary in a manner far more holy and like to God, by giving birth to the Word himself. I do indeed praise the ministry of preaching in Paul, but far more do I admire and venerate that mystery of generation in Mary.

Then again, is it not true that her children seem to recognize her as their Mother by a kind of instinctive devotion which faith gives them as second nature, so that first and foremost in all their needs and dangers they run to call upon her name just as children run to their mother's breast? So I think it is quite reasonable to understand of these children that promise of the prophet to her: 'Your children shall live in you'; provided that the prophecy is always understood to refer principally to the Church. Already we really dwell in the help of the Mother of the Most High; we do live in her protection, as if under the shadow of her wing. And afterwards in participating in her glory we shall be cherished as if in her bosom. Then a single cry of rejoicing and thanksgiving will be heard addressed to this Mother; 'The dwelling place of all of us who rejoice and are glad is in you, holy Mother of God.'

RESPONSARY

Mt 1: 20,21 ; Mic

5: 4-5

R It is by the Holy Spirit that Mary has conceived this child. She will bear a son,* and he will save his people from their sins.

V His greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth. He shall be a man of peace,* and he will save...

A reading from the homilies of St John Chrysostom

Adam and Christ, Eve and Mary

Have you seen the wonderful victory? Have you seen the splendid deeds of the Cross ? Shall I tell you something still more marvellous? Learn in what way the victory was gained, and you will be even more astonished. For by the very means by which the devil had conquered, by these Christ conquered him ; and taking up the weapons with which he had fought, he defeated him. Listen to how it was done.

A virgin, a tree and a death were the symbols of our defeat. The virgin was Eve: she had not yet known man; the tree was the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; the death was Adam's penalty. But behold again a Virgin and a tree and a death, those symbols of defeat become the symbols of his victory. For in place of Eve there is Mary; in place of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the tree of the Cross; in place of the death of Adam there is the death of Christ.

Do you see him defeated by the very things by which he had conquered? At the foot of the tree the devil overcame Adam; at the foot of the tree Christ vanquished the devil. And that first tree sent men to Hades; this second one calls back even those who had already gone down there. Again the former tree concealed man already despoiled and stripped; the second tree shows a naked victor on high for all to see. And that earlier death condemned those who were born after it; this second death gives life to those who were born before it. Who can tell the Lord's mighty deeds? By death we were made immortal : these are the glorious deeds of the Cross.

Have you understood the victory ? Have you grasped how it was wrought ? Learn now, how this victory was gained without any sweat and toil of ours. No weapons of ours were stained with blood; our feet did not stand in the frontline of the battle ; we suffered no wounds; witnessed no tumults ; and yet we obtained the victory. The battle was the Lord's, the crown is ours. Since then victory is ours, let us imitate the soldiers, and with joyful voices sing the songs of victory. Let us praise the Lord and say,

Death is swallowed up in victory.

O death, where is thy victory?

O death, where is thy sting?

The Cross did all these wonderful things for us: the Cross is a war memorial erected against the demons, a sword against sin, the sword by which Christ slew the serpent. The Cross is the Father's will, the glory of the Only-Begotten, the Spirit's exultation, the beauty of the angels, the guardian of the Church. Paul glories in the Cross; it is the rampart of the saints, it is the light of the whole world.

RESPONSARY

R Like a thorn which has borne a rose, Eve gave birth to Mary,* so that goodness might overpower our guilt and grace supplant our sin.

V The Lord willed this for our greater glory,* so that goodness...

Alternative Nn 63-65.

A reading from the Constitution on the Church of the Second Vatican Council

Mary, type of the Church as virgin and mother

RESPONSARY

R The salvation of the world has been made manifest to all who believe through the Virgin Mary,* whose wonderful life illumines the whole Church.

V Let us celebrate this day with the greatest devotion in memory of the Blessed Virgin Mary,* whose wonderful life...

The Second Reading may also be taken from the Memoria of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, or 16th July, or 22nd August, or 7th October, or 21st November.

THE COMMON OF APOSTLES

THE FIRST READING 1

Weeks 6-17

1 Cor 4: 1-16

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians

Let us be imitators of the Apostle as he imitates Christ himself

RESPONSARY Jn 15:15; Mt 13:11,16

R I shall not call you servants anymore, I call you friends,* because I have made known to you everything I have learned from my Father.

V The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are revealed to you; happy are your eyes because they see, your ears because they hear,* because I have made known to you...

THE FIRST READING 2

Weeks18-34 1 Cor 1: 18- 2:5

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians

The apostles preach the cross

RESPONSARY Mt 10: 18, 19-20

R When you are brought before governors and kings, do not consider anxiously what you are to say, or how you are to say it: * words will be given you when the time comes.

V The words you speak will not be yours; they will come from the Spirit of your Father speaking in you: * words will be given you when the time comes.

The Second Reading is from the Proper of Saints.

THE COMMON OF MARTYRS

SEVERAL MARTYRS

THE FIRST READING Rom 8: 18 -39

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans

Nothing can separate us from the love of God which comes to us in Christ Jesus

RESPONSARY Mt 5: 44 -45, 48

R Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute and insult you; * in this way you will be true sons of your Father in heaven.

V You are to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect; * in this way you will be...

THE SECOND READING

Letter 6, 1-2

A reading from the letters of St Cyprian

To attain the Lord's promises, we must imitate him

I greet you, brethren, and I only wish I could see you face to face, if conditions permitted me to visit you. I could long for nothing that would make me happier than to be with you. Then you could clasp me with those hands which, pure and innocent, kept their loyalty to Christ and rejected the sacrilegious offerings to idols.

What could be more joyful or uplifting for me than to embrace you, for you received grace to confess the Lord ? What could be better than to be looked at by your eyes which rejected the world and were worthy to behold God?

Circumstances do not allow me this pleasure, and so I am sending you this letter as a substitute, to be read by your eyes and heard by your ears. I congratulate you, and exhort you to persevere with strength and constancy in witnessing to divine grace. Now that you have started on the way the Lord has set out for you, press on to receive the crown in the power of the Spirit. The Lord will be your protector and guide, as he has said, 'Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.'

Happy the prison which your presence illuminates ! Happy the prison which despatches the men of God to heaven ! The darkness of this prison is brighter than the sun, it is more brilliant than this world's light. Here your

bodies have now become temples of God, sanctified by your profession of faith.

Let there be nothing in your hearts and minds now except God's words. It is by these that the Holy Spirit has all along strengthened you for suffering. Let no one think of death, but rather of immortality; do not think of the passing pain but of everlasting glory, as it is written, 'Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his faithful.' Another text says, 'The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; God does not despise a broken and contrite heart.'

Again, when scripture speaks of the sufferings which consecrate the martyrs to God, and sanctify them by the very trial of their martyrdom, it says, 'Though in the sight of men they were punished, their hope is full of immortality. They will govern nations and rule over peoples, and the Lord will reign over them for ever.'

When you reflect that you will be judges and will reign with Christ the Lord, you must rejoice. In the light of the joy that is to come, you must trample on present sufferings. Realize that here below, since the beginning of the world, justice has had to undergo a severe struggle in every age. Right in the beginning, the just Abel was killed, and from then on all the just men and the prophets and apostles have received their mission.

The Lord made himself a model of all this. He taught us that no one can come to his kingdom except those who have followed him on his way, when he said, 'He who loves his life in this world, will lose it. And he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.' And again, 'Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both body and soul in hell.'

Paul too exhorts us that if we wish to attain the Lord's promises, we should imitate the Lord in everything. 'We are children of God' he says, 'and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.'

RESPONSARY

R God looks on, his angels look on, Christ too, looks on as we struggle and strive in the contest of faith.* What great dignity and glory are ours, what happiness to join battle in the presence of God, and to be crowned by Christ, the Judge!

V Let us be armed with a great determination and be prepared to face the combat, pure in heart, sound in faith, and full of courage.* What great dignity and glory are ours...

ONE MARTYR

THE FIRST READING 2 Cor 4: 7 – 5:8

A reading from the second letter of St Paul to the Corinthians

The power of Christ is made manifest in our tribulations

RESPONSARY Cf Mt 5: 11, 12a, 10

R How blest are those who have suffered insults and persecution and every kind of calumny for my sake and have accepted it with gladness: * the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

V How blest are those who have suffered persecution for the cause of right; they will have a rich reward in heaven: * the kingdom of heaven is theirs.

THE SECOND READING Sermon 329

A reading from the sermons of St Augustine

Precious is the death of the martyr, bought with the price of the death of Christ

Through such glorious achievements of the holy martyrs with which the Church blossoms everywhere, we are ourselves proving to our own eyes how true are the words we have been singing that ‘precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.’ For it is precious both in our sight and in the sight of him in whose name the death took place.

But the price of those deaths is the death of one man. How many deaths did that one man purchase by his death, for, if he had not died, the grain of corn would not be multiplied? You heard his words when he drew near to his passion, that is when he was drawing near to our redemption, ‘Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.’

On the cross he carried out a vast transaction; there the purse of our price was unfastened and when his side was opened by the lance of the soldier there streamed the price for the redemption of the whole earth.

Now the faithful ones and martyrs have been purchased, but the faithfulness of the martyrs has been proved: their blood is the proof. The price paid for them they have repaid, and they have fulfilled what St John says, 'As Christ lay down his life for us, so we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.'

In another place it is stated, 'At a grand table you have sat; now carefully consider what has been put before you, since it is your duty to prepare for such things.' That table is great where the Lord of the table is himself the meal. No one feeds the guests with himself as food, but this is exactly what the Lord Christ does; he himself is the host who invites; he himself is the food and drink. Therefore the martyrs have recognized what they were eating and drinking so as to be able to repay such gifts.

But whence can they make such return unless he who first paid the cost supplies the source from which restitution may be made? That is the reason for the psalm where we sing what is written, 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints.' What does that commend to us?

There a man has considered what great things he has received from God; he has scrutinized the great gifts of the grace of the Almighty who created him, who sought him when lost, who fashioned him when found, who helped him when struggling with enfeebled strength, who never withdrew himself from him in danger, who crowned him as victor, who offered himself as a reward. All these things he considered, and exclaimed and said, 'What shall I render to the Lord for all his bounty to me? I will receive the cup of salvation.'

What is that cup? It is the cup of suffering, bitter, and yet bringing salvation, the cup which a sick man would fear to touch if his physician did not drink it first. This is the cup. We recognize that cup on the lips of Christ when he says, 'My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.'

Concerning this very cup, the martyrs have said, 'I will receive the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord.' Are you not afraid that you will fail? No, he says. Why? Because 'I will call on the name of the Lord.' How could the martyrs conquer, unless Christ conquered in the martyrs, for he said, 'Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world'?

The Commander of the heavens was ruling the minds and tongues of the martyrs, and by them was overcoming the devil on earth, and in heaven was crowning the martyrs. O blessed ones, who have thus drunk of that cup! They have finished their woes and have received honours.

Listen therefore, beloved brethren; what you cannot see with your eyes, you must study with your mind and intellect, and see that 'precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints'.

RESPONSARY 2 Tim 4: 7-8; Phil 3:8-10

R I have run the great race, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith,* and now the prize, the garland of righteousness awaits me.

V I have been glad to lose everything, that I may learn to know Christ and what it means to share his sufferings, to be moulded into the pattern of his death,* and now the prize...

THE COMMON OF PASTORS

THE FIRST READING

For a Pope or a Bishop

Tit 1: 7-11; 2:1-8

A reading from the letter of St Paul to Titus

The teaching of St Paul on the qualities and duties of a bishop

RESPONSARY

Cf Acts 20:28;

1Cor 4:2

R Keep watch over the flock of which the Holy Spirit has given you charge,* as shepherds of the Church of God, which he won for himself by the blood of his own Son.

V Stewards are expected to show themselves trustworthy,* as shepherds of the Church of God...

For a Priest

1 Pet 5: 1-11

A reading from the first letter of St Peter

The duties of pastors and faithful

RESPONSARY

1 Cor 4:1-2; Prov 20:6

R This is how we ought to be regarded, as Christ's servants, and stewards of God's mysteries,* and this is what we look for in choosing a steward: we must find one who is trustworthy,

V Many a man protests his loyalty, but where will you find one to keep faith? *And this is what we look for...

THE SECOND READING

For a Pope

Sermon 3 de Nat 2-3

A reading from a sermon by Pope St Leo the Great

What Christ instituted in Peter endures

I am weak in the discharge of my office and lacking in application; when I want to act with dedication and energy, I am held back by the frailty of my very nature. This may be so. But our Priest, almighty and eternal, is unceasing in mercy towards us; one like us and yet equal to the Father, he has brought his divinity down even to the human, and raised humanity to the divine. The source of my joy, as is right, is the plan which he made: for in giving the care of his sheep to many shepherds, he himself did not relinquish the custody of his beloved flock.

From his overriding, eternal protection we have received the support of the apostles' help also, an assistance which is still active; the strength of the foundation on which the whole structure of the Church is built is not weakened by the weight of the temple which rests on it.

The faith which won praise in the Head of the Apostles is solid and lasting. What Peter believed in Christ endures – so too what Christ instituted in Peter. What the Truth has established, then, abides: Peter continues as the foundation rock in the strength which he received and does not abandon the control of the Church which he has undertaken.

Peter was appointed over the others, and there is a hidden message for us here. He was called 'rock', he was declared a foundation, he was appointed doorkeeper of the kingdom of heaven, he was nominated judge to bind and to loose with judgements which would be valid in heaven. In this way we were to learn from his titles in what relationship he stood to Christ.

He continues to carry out with full effect the work which has been entrusted to him; he discharges every duty, every task of his office in Christ and with Christ, and through him he is glorified.

So, whatever I may achieve, whatever effective steps I may take, whatever I may obtain from the divine mercy by my daily prayers, is done through his work and his merits; his power is still living in his see and his authority is supreme.

This he owes to the confession he made as an apostle, which was inspired in him by God the Father, which transcended all the uncertainties of human opinions, and was given the solidity of an unshakeable rock.

Throughout the Church Peter proclaims everyday: 'You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God,' and every tongue which acknowledges the Lord is being taught by this confession.

RESPONSARY Mt 16:18; Ps 47:9

R Jesus said to Simon, I tell you this: You are Peter, and it is upon this rock that I will build my Church,* and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

V God has built it to endure for all eternity, * and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

For the Founder of a Church Nn 7-10

A reading from the Commentary of St Hilary on Psalm 126

God builds and guards his city

'Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain.' 'Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's spirit dwells in you?' This is the house and this is the temple of God, full of the precepts and of the energies of God, and capable of receiving the divine indwelling by holiness of heart, about which the same prophet has borne witness. 'Holy is your temple, wondrous in justice.' Holiness, justice, human temperance – this is the temple of God.

This house, therefore, must be built by the agency of God, for one which is constructed by human efforts does not endure, nor does it stand firm

when reared by the teachings of this age, nor will it be kept safe by the care of vain toil and of our anxiety.

It must be constructed in another way, it must be guarded in another way; it must not have its beginnings upon slippery and shifting sand, but its foundations must be laid firmly upon the prophets and apostles.

It must be increased with living stones, and held together by the cornerstone. It must be built up by an increase of mutual connections until it reaches to 'mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.' It must be adorned by the beauty and ornament of spiritual graces.

So this house which is built by God, that is by his teachings, will not collapse. This house will grow and expand into several houses as the divine buildings of the faithful make for the adornment and increase of the blessed community in each one of us.

The Lord has been a watchful guardian of this community now for a long time, when he protected Abraham on his journeys, when he intervened to save Isaac as he was being sacrificed, when he enriched Jacob in his time of bondage, when he placed over the land of Egypt, Joseph who had been sold as a slave, when he strengthened Moses against Pharaoh, when he chose Joshua as leader in the wars, when he freed David from all his dangers, when he rewarded Solomon with the gift of wisdom, when he came to the aid of the prophets, when he translated Elijah, when he chose Elisha, when he fed Daniel, when he poured moisture on the young men in the fiery furnace and as a fourth aided the three, when through the angel he instructed Joseph about his own birth from the virgin, when he encouraged Mary, and sent John as his forerunner, when he chose the apostles, when he prayed to the Father, 'Holy Father, keep them; while I was with them I kept them in your name,' and when finally he himself after his passion promised the watchful care of his eternal guardianship over us in these words, 'Lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.'

This is God's eternal protection of this blessed and holy community which is formed by the coming of many into one and which is in each individual one of us. Therefore it must be built by the agency of the Lord that it may grow up to reach the fullness of its consummation. The building already begun has not reached perfection, but through its building the completion of its perfection is being achieved.

RESPONSARY

1 Pet 2:4-5; Ps 117:21

R Come to the Lord, our living stone.* Come and let yourselves be built, as living stones, into a spiritual temple; become a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

V He is the stone which has become the corner-stone of the building.* and let yourselves be built...

Alternative, especially for a bishop

Sermon 1,2-3

A reading from the sermons of St Fulgentius of Ruspe

The faithful and wise steward

Wishing to emphasize the special office of the servants whom he has placed in charge of his people, the Lord says, 'Who do you think, is the faithful and wise steward whom the Lord sets over his household, to give them their measure of wheat at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.'

Who is that master, brethren? Without a doubt it is Christ, who says to his disciples, 'You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.'

What, too, is the Master's household? Doubtless it is the one which the Lord himself ransomed from the hand of the enemy and freed for his own service. This sacred household is the holy, Catholic Church, which is spread through the whole earth with abundant fertility, and glories in the fact that she has been redeemed by the precious blood of her Master. As he himself says, 'The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.'

He too, is the good shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep. The flock therefore of the good shepherd is the household of the Redeemer.

As to who the steward is who ought to be faithful as well as wise, the apostle Paul shows us, when, speaking of himself and his companions, he says, 'This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy.'

Now, lest anyone of us should think that it is only the apostles that have been made stewards, and lest anyone should neglect the duty of his spiritual military service and like a lazy servant yield unfaithfully and unwisely to

sleep, the blessed Apostle shows us that the bishops also are stewards, when he says, 'For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless.'

We therefore are the servants of the master of the household, we are the stewards of the Lord, we have received the measure of wheat to disburse to you.

If we should ask what the measure of wheat is, the blessed apostle Paul explains it also, saying, 'To each according to the measure of faith which God has assigned him.'

What therefore Christ calls the measure of wheat, Paul calls the measure of faith, so that we can learn that this spiritual wheat is nothing else but the revered sacrament of the Christian faith. The measure of this wheat we give you in the name of the Lord as often as we discourse according to the rule of the true faith, being enlightened by the gift of spiritual grace; and you receive this same measure of wheat by the hands of the stewards of the Lord when daily you hear the word of truth from the servants of God's household.

RESPONSARY

Mt 25: 21,20

R Well done, good and faithful servant; you have shown you can be faithful in small things, I will trust you with greater.* Come and join in your master's happiness.

V Lord, you entrusted me with five talents; here are five more that I have made.* Come and join in your master's happiness.

For a Priest

Ch 3:12

A reading from the Decree on the Priestly Ministry and Life of the Second Vatican Council

Priests are called to perfection

RESPONSARY

1 Thess 2:8; Gal 4:19

R With all our hearts we desired nothing better than to offer you our own lives, as well as God's gospel,* so greatly had we learned to love you.

V My little children, I am in travail over you afresh, until I can see Christ's image formed in you,* so greatly had we learned to love you.

For a Missionary

Nn 4-5

A reading from the Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church of the Second Vatican Council

Go and teach all the nations

RESPONSARY

Mk 16:15-16 ; Jn 3:5

R Go out to the whole world; proclaim the Good News to all creation: * He who believes and is baptized will be saved.

V No one can enter the kingdom of God without being born from water and Spirit.* He who believes...

THE COMMON OF DOCTORS OF THE CHURCH

THE FIRST READING

Sir 39:1-10

A reading from the book of Ecclesiasticus

The wise man is wise though his study of the word of God in scripture

RESPONSARY

Sir 15:5-6

R The Lord found words for him when he spoke in the Church,* and filled him with wisdom and understanding.

V The Lord has crowned him with joy and exultation,* and filled him with wisdom and understanding.

THE SECOND READING

Speculum PL 180:384

A reading from the Mirror of Charity by William of Saint-Thierry

The understanding of the faith to be sought in the Holy Spirit

When more obscure mysteries are presented to your timid nature of your faith, Christian soul, take courage and say, 'How are these to come about?', not in a controversial spirit but with the love of a disciple.

Let your questioning be your prayer, your love, your piety, your humble desire; not seeking to plumb the depths of God's majesty, but looking for salvation in the healing acts of the God who saves us. And the Angel of great counsel will reply to you: 'When the Counsellor comes, he whom I shall send from the Father, he will bring to mind all things, and teach you all truth.' For no one 'knows a man's thoughts except the spirit of the man which is in him; so also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.'

Hasten then to be a sharer in the Holy Spirit. He is present when he is called upon; nor could he be called upon, if he were not present. When, on being called upon, he comes, it is with the abundance of the blessings of God. He is the flowing of the river which gives joy to God's city.

And if, when he comes, he finds you humble and still and respecting the words of God, he will rest upon you; and he will reveal to you what God the Father withdraws from the wise and the prudent of this world; and those things will begin to dawn upon you which Wisdom could say to the disciples when on this earth, but which they were unable to bear, until the Spirit of truth came who was to teach them all truth.

In the diligent seeking after or learning of these matters it would be vain to expect from any human nature what cannot be sought or learnt from the lips of Truth himself. For as that Truth says, 'God is spirit', and as it is necessary for those who adore him to do so in spirit and in truth; so for those who wish to learn of him or know him it is only in the Holy Spirit that the understanding of the faith and the perception of the pure and unadorned truth ought to be sought.

For in the darkneses and ignorance of this life, he is the light which enlightens the lowly of spirit; he is the love which draws us; he is the sweetening presence; he man's approach to God; he the love of the living; he is devotion; he is piety.

He reveals to the faithful the justice of God which starts from faith and ends in faith; when for grace he gives grace, and for the faith which by hearing the faith which give light.

RESPONSARY

Mt 13:52; cf Prov 14:33

R When a teacher of the Law has become a learner in the kingdom of heaven, he is like a householder, * who can produce from his store both the

new and the old.

V Wisdom instructs even fools, but she makes her home in the heart of a discerning man,* who can produce from his store...

Alternative

Nn 7-8

A reading from the Constitution on Divine Revelation of the Second Vatican Council

The transmission of divine revelation

RESPONSARY

1 Pet 1:25; cf Lk 1:2

R The word of the Lord endures for evermore; * This 'word' is the word of the gospel preached to you.

V It follows the traditions handed down to us by the original eyewitnesses and servants of the Gospel.* This 'word' is the word of the gospel preached to you.

THE COMMON OF VIRGINS

THE FIRST READING

1Cor 7:25-40

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians

Christian virginity

RESPONSARY

R The king has desired that beauty of yours which he himself has made; he is your God, he is your king:* your king is himself your husband.

V You are wedded to your king and your God, who has endowed and adorned you, redeemed you and made you holy.*Your king is himself your husband.

THE SECOND READING

Nn 3-4, 22. 23

A reading from the Treatise of St Cyprian on the dress of virgins

The greater the number of virgins, the greater the joy of Mother Church

We have now to address the virgins. The greater their glory, the greater is our anxiety about them. Virginity is the flower of the Church, the beauty of spiritual grace, happiness, the incorrupt and complete work of praise and honour. It is the image of God, corresponding to the holiness of the Lord; it is the noblest part of Christ's flock. The vitality of Mother Church is shown in the virgins, and expresses its joy through them. The greater the number of the virgins, the greater the joy of Mother Church.

It is to these we are speaking, it is these we are exhorting – from love rather from authority. We are only too aware of our own unworthiness, we are the least and the last of all. We are not aiming at correcting abuses but, all the more careful on account of our anxiety, we fear the devil's attacks.

This is no unnecessary warning or vain anxiety; it is concerned with the Lord's lifegiving precepts. Its aim is that the virgins who have dedicated themselves to Christ and have withdrawn from the desires of the flesh, should consecrate themselves body and soul to God. They should bring to completion this work which is destined for a great reward. They should not plan to beautify themselves for anyone or please anyone except their Lord; it is from him that they await the reward of their virginity.

Virgins, maintain what you have begun to be; maintain what you will one day be. A great reward is yours, the great reward of virtue, the greatest grace of chastity. What we shall be, you have already begun to be. You possess, already in this world, the glory of the resurrection. You are passing through the world without being tainted by the world. When you remain chaste and virginal, you are equal to the angels of God, on condition however that your virginity continues strong and unviolated, and that what was courageously begun is seen through to the end. Let it not look for the beauty of jewels or clothing, but of character.

The apostle whom the Lord called his vessel of election, and whom God sent to proclaim the heavenly precepts says, 'The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, let us also bear the image of the man of heaven.' This is the image which virginity bears, purity bears it, holiness and truth bear it.

RESPONSARY

1 Cor 7:34; ps 72:26

R An unmarried woman, like a young girl, can devote herself to the Lord's affairs;* her aim is to be dedicated to him in body as in spirit.

V God is the strength of her heart; he is hers forever,* Her aim is to be dedicated...

Alternative

Nn 1.5.6.12

A reading from the Decree on the Appropriate Renewal of the Religious Life of the Second Vatican Council

The Church follows her only spouse, Christ

RESPONSARY

R How great is your beauty, virgin of Christ! * You have proved worthy of the reward given by the Lord, the crown of perpetual virginity.

V Nothing could bring you to surrender virginity; Nothing could separate you from the love of the Son of God.* You have been proved worthy...

THE COMMON OF MEN SAINTS

THE FIRST READING

Col 3:1-17

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Colossians

Your life is hidden with Christ in God

RESPONSARY

Gal 3: 27-28; Eph 4: 24

R All baptized in Christ, you have all clothed yourselves in Christ, and there are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek; *all of you are one in Christ Jesus.

V Put on the new self that has been created in God's way, in the goodness and the holiness of the truth;* all of you...

Alternative

Rom 12:1-21

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans

The Christian Life, a spiritual worship

RESPONSARY

Rom 12:2 ; Eph 4: 23-24

R Be transformed by the renewal of your mind,* that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

V You must be made new in mind and spirit and put on the new nature,* that you may prove...

For a saint who was married

Eph 5: 21-32

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians

The holiness of Christian marriage

RESPONSARY

1 Pet 1: 13,15 ; cf Lev 11:44

R Free your minds of what would weigh them down, since it is the Holy One who has called you; * be holy in all you do.

V It is I, the Lord, who am your God. Be holy because I am holy.* Be holy in all you do.

THE SECOND READING

Hom 20,4

A reading from the homilies of St John Chrysostom on the Acts of the Apostles.

The light of a Christian cannot be hid

Nothing is colder than a Christian who does not care for the salvation of others.

You cannot plead poverty here; for the poor widow who put in two copper coins will be your accuser. Moreover, Peter said, 'Silver and gold I have none', and Paul was so poor that he often went hungry and lacked necessary food.

You cannot plead lowliness of birth; for the apostles also were lowly men and of humble parents. You cannot allege want of education; for they too were unlearned men. You cannot plead infirmity, for Timothy was of delicate health and was frequently ill.

Everyone can be of profit to his neighbour, if he will fulfil his role.

Look at the trees of the forest: how strong they are, how beautiful, how large also, and smooth, and of great height, but they do not bear fruit. If we had a garden, we should much rather have pomegranates or fruitful olive trees. The others are for the delight of the eye, not for profit, which in their case is very small.

Men who are interested only in themselves are like the forest trees, or rather they are not even so good. In fact they are fit only for the fire, for the forest timber can be used for building houses and palisades. Such are the foolish virgins of the parable, chaste indeed and decent and modest, but as they are of no profit to anyone they are rejected. Such are they who do not nourish Christ.

Observe that none of these are charged with particular sins of their own, with fornication, for instance, or with perjury; in short, with no sin but that of being no use to the another. Such was the man who buried his talent, showing indeed a blameless life, but not being useful to others.

How can such a one be a Christian? If yeast when mixed with the flour did not raise the whole batch, would it be yeast at all? Again, if a perfume could not be perceived by those around, could it in any sense be called a perfume?

Do not say, 'It is impossible for me to induce others to be Christians,' for if you were really a Christian, it would be impossible for you not to do so. As all nature acts in accordance with its own properties, so in this case too; this is part of the very nature of being a Christian.

Do not insult God. To say that the sun cannot shine would be to insult him; to say that being a Christian is useless is to insult God and call him a liar. It is easier for the sun not to give heat, not to shine, than for a Christian not to send forth light; it is easier for the light to be darkness than for this to be so.

Do not tell me that it is impossible; it is the contrary that is impossible. Do not insult God. If we once get our own affairs right, the other will certainly follow as a natural and necessary consequence. It is not possible for the light of a Christian to be hid; it is not possible for a lamp so conspicuous as that to be concealed.

RESPONSARY

Eph 5:8-9; Mt 5: 14, 16

R You are light in the Lord; be like children of light,* for the effects of the light are seen in complete goodness and right living and truth.

V You are the light of the world. Your light must shine in the sight of men,* for the effects of the light...

Alternative

Sermon 96,1.4.9

A reading from the sermons of St Augustine

Concerning the universal call to holiness

‘If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.’ The Lord’s command that if any wishes to follow him he must deny himself, seems hard and difficult. But after all, it is not hard and difficult seeing that it is the command of him who himself aids in the carrying out of what he commands.

For what is said to him in the psalm is true, ‘Because of your command I have followed the hard road.’ True, too, are his own words, ‘My yoke is easy and my burden is light.’ In a word, whatsoever in the precept is hard is made easy by love.

What is the meaning of ‘Let him take up his cross’? It means, let him bear whatever is vexatious: on that understanding, let him follow me. For when he begins to follow me in my character and my teaching, he will have many to contradict him, many to forbid him, many to dissuade him – and that takes place actually among those who are the companions of Christ. The people who wished to deter the blind man from calling out were at that time walking with Christ. Whether therefore it is a matter of threats or flatteries or any kinds of prohibitions, if you wish to follow, turn to the cross, endure, bear up, and refuse to surrender.

And so in this world, which is holy, good, reconciled, saved, - or rather in the process of being saved, but at present saved by hope, - ‘for in this hope we were saved’ – in this world, that is the Church which follows Christ in her totality, he has said to all men at once, ‘If any man would come after me, let him deny himself.’

This is not a case where virgins ought to hear the exhortation and married women not, where widows ought to hear and young wives not, where monks ought to hear and married men not, where clerics ought to hear but not the laity, but rather let the universal Church, the universal body,

all her members divided and distributed in their various offices, let them all follow Christ.

Let her follow in her unique unity, let her follow as the dove, let her follow as the bride, let her follow, ransomed and endowed by the blood of her spouse. There the innocence of the virgins has her place, there the chastity of the widows has its place, there the purity of marriage has its place.

Let all those members which have their place there, each in their natural kind, each in their own place, each in their own way, follow Christ; let them deny themselves, take up their cross, that is, endure in the world for Christ whatever the world has brought on them. Let them love him who alone does not deceive, who alone is not cheated, who alone does not cheat. Let them love him because his promise is true. But because he does not give immediately, faith is shaken. Endure, persevere, bear, put up with delay, and then you have borne the cross.

RESPONSARY

R This man worked great marvels in the sight of God and praised the Lord with his whole heart,* May he obtain forgiveness for the sins of all the peoples.

V Here is a blameless man, a true worshipper of God. He kept himself from every evil deed, retaining his innocence.* may he obtain forgiveness...

THE COMMON OF WOMEN SAINTS

THE FIRST READING

An appropriate text taken from the Common of Men Saints

Alternative, for a saint who was married.

Prov 31: 10-31

A reading from the book of Proverbs

The woman who fears the Lord

RESPONSARY

cf Prov 31: 17,18; cf Ps 45:6

R She girds herself with strength and makes her arms strong,* and so her lamp will never be extinguished.

V God will help her at the dawning of the day; God is with her, she cannot be shaken,* and so her lamp will never be extinguished.

Alternative for the same

1 Pet 3:1-6, 8-17

A reading from the first letter of St Peter

Christ in your hearts

RESPONSARY

Phil 2: 2,3,4; 1 Thess 5;14-15

R Love one another; humbly reckon others better than yourselves.* Look at each other's interests and not merely to your own.

V Support the weak and be very patient with them all, always aiming at doing the best you can for each other and for all men.* Look to each other's interest...

THE SECOND READING

An appropriate text taken from the Common of Men Saints

Alternative, for a Saint who was married

March 11, 1942

A reading from a talk by Pope Pius XII to newly married couples

The wife – the radiant sun of the family

The family has its own radiant sun, the wife. Hear how scripture puts it:

The grace of a wife will charm her husband,

Her accomplishments will make him the stronger.

A silent wife is a gift from the Lord,

No price can be put on a well trained character.

A modest wife is a boon twice over,

A chaste character cannot be weighed on scales.

Like the sun rising over the mountains of the Lord

is the beauty of a good wife in a well kept house.

Yes; the wife and the mother is the radiant sun of the family. She is this sun by her generosity and gift of self, by her unfailing readiness, by her watchful and prudent delicacy in all matters which can add joy to the lives of her husband and her children. She spreads around her light and warmth. And if you can say that a marriage augurs well, when both partners seek the happiness of the other rather than their own, this noble feeling and intention is more especially the quality of the wife, although it concerns both husband and wife. It is born of the very pulse of her mother's heart and it's wisdom; that wisdom which if it receives bitterness, gives only joy; if it receives belittlement, returns only dignity and respect. It is like the sun which brightens the cloudy morning with its dawning ray and in its setting gilds the evening shower.

The wife is the radiant sun of the family with the brightness of her glance and the ardour of her word; a glance and a word which gently enter the soul, bending it and making it softer and lifting it out of the tumult of passion, and recalling her husband to the joy in the good and in the familiar conversation, after a long day of uninterrupted and often painful work, whether professional or agricultural, in commerce or in industry. The wife is the radiant sun of the family by her natural candour, by her simple dignity and by her Christian and decent behaviour, as much by her collectedness of mind and uprightness of heart, as in the subtle harmony of her bearing and her dress, in her becomingness and in her behaviour at once reserved and affectionate. Little signs of feeling, shades of facial expression, ingenuous silences and smiles, an approving movement of the head give to her the grace of some choice and yet simple flower which opens its petals to receive and reflect the colours of the sun.

If you could only know what deep feelings of affection and gratitude such an ideal wife and mother arouses and imprints in the hearts of her husband and sons!

RESPONSARY

Sir 26: 16,21

R The grace of a wife will charm her husband; * a modest wife is a two-fold boon.

V Like the sun rising over the mountains of the Lord is the beauty of a good wife in a well kept house; a modest wife is a two-fold boon.

THE COMMON OF SAINTS FOR RELIGIOUS

THE FIRST READING

Phil 3:7 – 4:1, 4-9

A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Philippians

Be joyful in the Lord at all times

RESPONSARY

Lk 12:35-36; Mt 24:42

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

V Stay awake, because you do not know the day when your master is coming: * be like men waiting for their master...

Alternative for a Nun

R I have spurned the kingdom of this world with all its trappings for the love of Jesus Christ, my Lord, * whom I have seen and loved, in whom I have believed, whom I have chosen for my own.

V My heart overflows with noble words; to the King I must speak the song I have made,* whom I have seen...

THE SECOND READING

Bk 2, Hom 36, 11-13

A reading from the homilies of Pope St Gregory the Great on the Gospels

In the world but not in the world

I want to advise you to leave everything but I do not want to be presumptuous. If therefore you are unable to abandon everything which the world offers, you must so hold those things that are of this world that you may not be held by them in the world; that earthly interests may be possessed, not be the possessor and that what you have should be under the control of your mind. Otherwise, if your mind is bound by the love of earthly things, it may itself rather be possessed by its own possessions.

Therefore let temporal possessions be what you use, eternal things be what you desire. Let temporal goods be for use on the way, eternal goods be for when you arrive at your goal. Whatever goes on in this world, let it be as

if glanced at from the side. Let the eyes of our minds gaze straight ahead of us, while they are focused intently on the goal to which we shall come.

Let faults be torn up by the roots, torn away not only from the action in deed, but also from the meditation of the heart. See that the pleasures of the flesh, the anxiety of carefulness, the fever of ambition do not hold us back from the great supper of the Lord, but also let us only touch obliquely as it were with our mind those honourable things which we do in the world, so that the earthly things which delight us may so serve our body that they hinder our heart as little as possible.

My brethren, we do not take it upon us to say to you that you should give up everything, but yet, even while holding to all things, you can if you wish, leave them, if you so handle temporal matters as to strive with the whole mind to eternal aims. That man uses the world as if he were not using it, who brings to the service of his life from outside all things necessary, and yet does not allow them to lord it over his mind, so that they are subject to him and serve him from outside, and never break the concentration of his mind as it aims at higher things. Whoever therefore are like this, have all earthly things for their use and not as objects of their desires. Therefore let there be nothing to hold back the desire of your mind, let not the love of anything in this world entangle you.

If the good is loved, then let the mind delight in better goods, that is in heavenly. If evil is feared, let eternal evils be put before the mind, so that when it sees there in heaven both a greater abundance of what it loves and of what it fears, it will no longer cling here on earth.

To carry out these things we have a mediator between God and men, our helper, through whom we shall more quickly obtain everything, if we burn with true love for him, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever. Amen.

RESPONSARY

1 Cor 7:29, 30,31 ; 2:12

R Our time is growing short. Those who enjoy life should live as if there were nothing to enjoy, and those who deal in worldly things should not become engrossed in them.* I say this because the world as we know it is passing away.

V It is not the spirit of the world that we have received. * I say this...

THE COMMON OF SAINTS NOTED FOR WORKS OF MERCY

THE FIRST READING

1 Cor 12: 31 – 13: 13

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians

The supremacy of charity

RESPONSARY

1 Jn 4: 16,7

R We ourselves have put our faith in God's love towards ourselves.*
Anyone who lives in love lives in God, and God lives in him.

V Let us love ne another, since love comes from God.* Anyone who lives
in love...

THE SECOND READING

Hom 15,6

A reading from the homilies of St John Chrysostom on the epistles to the
Romans

Christ commands us to be merciful

God for his part delivered up his Son; but you refuse to give even some
bread to Christ who was delivered up and killed for you.

For your sake the Father did not spare him, although he was in fact his
own Son. You however despise him as he hungers, although the expense
you would entail would be paid out of what is Christ's, and would turn to
your own profit. He was delivered up for you, killed for you. He wandered
around hungry for your sake You have only to give away something of his
to receive benefits yourself. Even this you refuse to do.

How senseless are they who in spite of so many inducements remain in
this brutal cruelty! Christ did not consider it enough to undergo the cross
and death. He willed to become poor and a stranger, a naked wanderer, a
prisoner and a sick man, so that at least by this means he might draw you to
himself.

If you do not pay me back, as one who has suffered for you, take pity on
me for my poverty. If you do not take pity on me for my poverty, have
compassion on account of my sickness or imprisonment. If not even these
can soften your heart, consider how small a thing it is that I ask. I am not
looking for anything expensive, but only for a bite to eat, a roof over my
head, a few words of comfort.

If you are still adamant, change for the better at least for the sake of the kingdom of heaven and of the rewards I have promised. Or does all this mean nothing to you?

At any rate be touched by natural compassion when you see someone with not a rag to cover him, remembering how I was naked on the cross for you. If the nakedness of the poor man leaves you unmoved, remember mine.

Now, as then, I am in bonds for you. Show me some mercy when you think of my former or my present sufferings. Then I fasted for your sake, once again I am hungry for your sake. I suffered thirst when I was hanging on the cross ; I suffer thirst now in my poor. All that I have done, all that I am doing, is meant to draw you to myself, and make you gentle and kind for your own salvation.

I am asking you to repay me for the thousand benefits I conferred on you. I am not asking it as from a debtor: I want to reward your generosity, and give you the kingdom in exchange for these trifles.

I do not ask you to do away with my poverty, or to give me wealth, even though I became poor for you. I am only asking for a loaf of bread, some clothes, some relief in my hunger.

If I am thrown into prison, I am not forcing you to have me released; I only ask that you come to visit me. This will be enough for me, in return for this I will give you heaven. Even though I have released you from the worst possible prison, it will be enough for me if you come to see me in prison.

I could indeed bestow the crown on you without all this; but I wish to be in your debt, so that the crown may give you some feeling of confidence.

RESPONSARY

Mt 25. 35,40 ; Prov 19:17

R When I was hungry, you fed me, when I was thirsty, you gave me to drink; when I was a stranger, you took me into your home.* I tell you this: anything you did for one of my brothers here, however humble, you did for me.

V He who is generous to the poor lends to the Lord.* I tell you this...

THE COMMON OF SAINTS FOR EDUCATORS

All from the Common of Men Saints or Women Saints except the following for The Office of Readings

THE SECOND READING

Hom 59

A reading from the homilies of St John Chrysostom on St Matthew's Gospel

We should take care of our children's good

When the Lord, speaking of children, says, 'Their angels always behold the face of my father,' and 'for this I came,' and 'this is my Father's will,' he made those responsible for them take their task more seriously.

See what a protective wall he puts around them. He holds out the threat of fatal punishment for those who cause them to fall. To those who serve them and take care of them, following his example and that of his Father, he promises great blessings. Let us follow that example, let us never refuse to undertake what may seem tedious or beneath us, for the sake of our brothers. However insignificant and worthless is the one whom we are to serve, however laborious is the work involved, even if we have to cross mountains and precipices, let us put up with everything to save our brothers. God has such an eager care for the soul that he did not spare his own Son. And so, from the moment we leave our home in the morning we must have as our one objective and chief preoccupation to save those in spiritual danger.

Nothing is worth as much as the soul: 'What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and suffers the loss of his own soul?' The love of money corrupts and degrades everything. Once it invades souls, like a tyrant invading a citadel, it casts out the fear of God. And so we neglect our children's salvation and our own ; we have only one aim, to become richer and leave our wealth to others, who will pass it on to their descendants, who in turn will pass it on to others after them; in fact we become mere transmitters of our own money and possessions, but not masters of them.

An absurd consequence follows: free men are of less worth than slaves. For we set a value on slaves, if not as persons, at least for their usefulness to us; but free men do not enjoy even this consideration; they are of less value in our estimation than these slaves.

Why do I say this ? Because children are less valued than cattle ; because we take greater care of horses and donkeys than we do of children. If a man has a mule, he is very concerned to have the best driver, and not one who is reckless or a thief or a drunkard or incompetent. But if we have to appoint a tutor to care for our child's soul, we accept quite at random the first fellow who comes along. Yet there is no greater art than this.

What can equal the work of training the soul, of forming the young mind? The man who has this art must be more painstaking than any painter or sculptor.

But we take no account of this; we are concerned only to provide him with a training in language, and once again it is the acquisition of money that prompts us. He is taught how to speak, not in view of communication but in order to make money. Indeed if it were possible to become rich even without this ,we should pay no attention to it.

See the great tyranny of money : it has seized control of all things; it has bound them like a gang of slaves or beasts and pulls them wherever it wants.

But what do we gain from making accusations against it? We can only attack it with words, but it defeats us in action. Despite this, we shall not stop attacking it with our words. If any progress is made, we shall both gain, you and we; but if you remain simply as you are, we at least have fulfilled all our duty.

May God cure you of this disease and so give us something to be proud of in you. To him be glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.

RESPONSARY

Cf Prov 23:26; 1:9; 5:1

R My son, mark my words, and accept my guidance with a will,* for they are a garland of grace on your head.

V My son, attend to my wisdom and listen to my good counsel,* for they are a garland...

THE OFFICE FOR THE DEAD

THE FIRST READING

1 Cor 15: 12-34

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians

The resurrection of Christ is the hope of the faithful

RESPONSARY

1 Cor 15: 25-26 ; cf Rev 20: 13,14

R Christ must be king until God has put all his enemies under his feet,* and the last of the enemies to be destroyed is death.

V Death and Hades will give up their dead, and then they will be flung into the lake of fire,* and the last of the enemies to be destroyed is death.

Alternative

1 Cor 15: 35-57

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Corinthians

The resurrection of the dead and the coming of the Lord

RESPONSARY

Cf Job 19: 25,26,27

R I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last day I shall rise up from the dust,* and in my flesh I shall look on God my Saviour.

V I myself, and no other, shall see him; these very eyes will gaze on him,* and in my flesh....

Alternative

2 Cor 4: 16 – 5: 10

A reading from the second letter of St Paul to the Corinthians

When we die, there is an eternal home for us in heaven

RESPONSARY

R Lord, do not judge me according to what I have done. I have accomplished nothing of value in your sight. I implore your majesty: *O God, wipe away my iniquity.

V Wash me clean of my guilt and purify me from my sin.* O God, wipe away my iniquity.

THE SECOND READING

Or 5, 6-7. 9

A reading from the sermons of St Anastasius of Antioch
Christ will change our lowly body

To this end Christ died and lived again, that he may be Lord both of the dead and of the living. But God is not God of the dead but of the living. Consequently, the dead over whom he who lives has power are no longer dead but alive. Life has power over them so that they may live without any further fear of death just as Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again.

Raised up and freed from corruption they shall see death no more. They shall share in the resurrection of Christ just as he shared in their death.

For no other reason did he descend to earth, whose bars are the barriers to eternity, except to 'shatter the doors of bronze, and cut in two the bars of iron.' He came to lead our lives away from corruption to himself and gave us freedom in place of slavery.

If the work of this arrangement of providence does not seem to be finished yet – men still die and their bodies rot in the grave – this should in no way undermine our faith. In advance of all the good things already mentioned we have even now received a pledge through Christ our first fruits. Through him we attain the highest heaven and take our places with him who carried us up to the heights with himself. That is what St Paul says somewhere, 'he raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.' The fulfilment will be ours at the time appointed by the Father when we shall lay aside childhood and reach mature manhood. Such is the mind of the Father of ages to establish his gift and not allow it to be despised once again by a heart that reverts to childhood.

There is no need to mention that the Lord rose with a spiritual body. Paul gives us his witness about bodies, 'It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body.' That means they are transfigured in the likeness of the glorious transfiguration of Christ, the leader who has gone on ahead.

Moreover, the Apostle, who clearly knew this, says that this will happen to the whole human race through Christ, who will change our lowly body to make it like his glorious body.

If transfiguration is the changing to a spiritual body and that body is the glorious body of Christ, then Christ rose with a spiritual body. That body was none other than the one sown in dishonour, and was the very same that was changed into glory.

When this glorious body has brought the first –fruits of our nature to the Father, he will then bring to him the whole universe as he promised when he said, ‘ when I am lifted up, I will draw all men to myself.’

RESPONSARY

Jn 5: 28-29; 1 Cor 15:52

R All who are in the grave will hear the voice of the Son of God and come out: * those who have done right will rise to life; those who have done wrong will rise to hear their doom.

V In a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet-call, the dead will rise: * those who have done right...

Alternative

Letter 19

A reading from the letters of St Braulio of Saragossa

The risen Christ is the hope of all believers.

Christ, the hope of all who have faith, calls those who leave this world, not the dead but those who are asleep. He says, ‘Lazarus, our friend is asleep.’ Nor would the holy apostle have us grieve over those who are asleep. His reason is that if our faith holds that all who believe in Christ shall not die forever, as the gospel says, then we know by faith that because he is not dead so neither shall we die.

‘For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise.’

May this hope of resurrection put heart into us since we shall see again in heaven those whom we lose on earth. All we have to do is to believe firmly in Christ and obey his commandments. Such is his power that he can raise the dead more easily than we can arouse the sleeping.

We say this but then some emotion starts our tears once again and the feeling of selfish longing prevails over the believing heart. Such is the wretchedness of our humanity that everything that happens in our life without Christ is mere emptiness.

O unfeeling death, cruelly pulling asunder those who are joined together, and parting those who are united in friendship! But now is your power destroyed and your godless yoke shattered by him who gave you stern

warning when he said through Osee, ‘ O death I will be your death.’ To which we add our own taunts in the words of the Apostle, ‘O death, where is your victory ? O death where is your sting ?’ He who conquered is our redeemer. He gave his beloved soul into the hands of wicked men in order to make of them his loved ones.

It would take me along time if I had to quote everything that scripture offers for our consolation. But the hope of the resurrection should be enough for us as we turn our eyes towards the glory of our redeemer. By our faith we know that we have already risen in him, as the Apostle says, ‘ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we also live together with him.’

We belong not to ourselves but to him who redeemed us. Our will must always be dependant on his, which is why we pray, ‘Thy will be done.’ That is also the reason that we must say with Job as he mourned, ‘The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away ; blessed be the name of the Lord.’ Let us say that with Job here on earth. If we imitate him in the present circumstances we shall not be unlike him in heaven.

RESPONSARY

Cf 1 Thess 4: 13-14 ; Jer 22:10

R Do not grieve for those who are asleep as others do who have no hope, * for since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

V Weep not for him who is dead, nor lament for him,* for since we believe that Jesus died...