

WEEK 6

SUNDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *1 Cor. 6: 12 – 20*

A reading from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians.

"All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be enslaved by anything. "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food" -- and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I therefore take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who joins himself to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two shall become one flesh." But he who is united to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. Shun immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body; but the immoral man sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Responsorial. *1 Cor. 6: 19, 20, 17*

R: Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, and that you do not belong to yourselves? * You have been bought with a price. Glorify therefore the Lord in your body!

V: He who unites himself to the Lord forms only one spirit with him. Flee from fornication!

R: You have been bought with a price. Glorify therefore the Lord in your body!

Second Reading. Book 3

The first fruits of the resurrection of Christ.

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

For this reason the Word of God became man and the Son of God became the son of man in order that man, being mingled with the Word of God and being granted adoption should become the Son of God.

In no other way could we have received incorruptibility and immortality, without ourselves first being united to them. How could we be made one with incorruptibility unless these two had first become what we are? Only in this way could corruptibility be absorbed by incorruptibility and mortality by immortality and so enable us to receive adoption as sons.

This same Son of God, therefore, who is our Lord and the existing Word of the Father is also son of man. He was born, like other men, born of Mary, who was herself of human stock and a member of the human race, and so he became the son of man.

It was for this reason that the Lord gave a sign here below and in heaven above that man had not asked for. Man had neither hoped that a virgin could be with child and bear a son, although she was a virgin; nor that this child would be God with us (cfr. Is. 7: 14; Mt. 1: 23) coming down to the earth below in search of the sheep that was lost (which he himself had made) and once again ascending on high and offering in trust to the Father the man he had found. This same Lord himself became the first fruits of the resurrection of man, so that the resurrection of the head should mean the resurrection of the rest of the body, and that every man alive should rise again on completion of the time of punishment, which his disobedience had earned. For the body in its varied joints and ligaments grows up and is strengthened by God's aid, and each of the members has its appropriate fitting place in the body. The Father has many mansions in the same way as there are many members in the body.

When, therefore, man fell, God was generous in mercy, since he foresaw the victory that would be his through the agency of the Word. For because his power was made perfect in weakness, he displayed the kindness of God and the greatness of his power.

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

R: Christ has been raised from the dead, the first- fruits of those who have fallen asleep; * as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

V: Death came through one man and in the same way the resurrection of the dead has come through one man:

R: as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *1 Thes. 1: 1- 2:12*

Paul and the Thessalonians

A reading from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians.

Paul, Silva'nus, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalo'nians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace. We give thanks to God always for you all, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

For we know, brethren beloved by God, that he has chosen you; for our gospel came to you not only in word, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit and with full conviction. You know what kind of men we proved to be among you for your sake.

And you became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you received the word in much affliction, with joy inspired by the Holy Spirit; so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For not only has the word of the Lord sounded forth from you in Macedonia and Achaia, but your faith in God has gone forth everywhere, so that we need not say anything.

For they themselves report concerning us what a welcome we had among you, and how you turned to God from idols, to serve a living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

For you yourselves know, brethren, that our visit to you was not in vain; but though we had already suffered and been shamefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in the face of great opposition.

For our appeal does not spring from error or uncleanness, nor is it made with guile; but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not to please men, but to please God who tests our hearts.

For we never used either words of flattery, as you know, or a cloak for greed, as God is witness; nor did we seek glory from men, whether from you or from others, though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nurse taking care of her children.

So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

For you remember our labour and toil, brethren; we worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you, while we preached to you the gospel of God. You are witnesses, and God also, how holy and righteous and blameless was our behaviour to you believers; for you know how, like a father with his children, we exhorted each one of you and encouraged you and charged you to lead a life worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.

Responsorial. *1 Thes. 1: 9, 10; 3: 12, 13*

R: You have been converted to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus * who delivers us from the wrath to come.

V: May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he give you inner strength that you may be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes,

R: who delivers us from the wrath to come.

Second Reading.

Rejoice always in the Lord.

A reading from the “Treatise on the Letter to the Philippians” of St. Ambrose, bishop.

The charity of God, dearest brothers, calls us to the joys of the eternal beatitudes for the salvation of our souls. The joys of the world lead towards

sadness without end; the joys that respond to the will of the Lord, instead lead those who cultivate them to the lasting and un-setting happiness. For this the Apostle says: “I repeat, what I want is your happiness” (Phil. 4: 4).

He exhorts us to make our joy in God grow always more through the observation of his commandments, because the more we will have fought in this world in order to obey the precepts of the Lord, the more will we be blessed in the future life, and the greater glory will we gain for ourselves in the eyes of God.

“Let your tolerance be evident to everyone” (Phil. 4: 5); that is, let your holy behaviour be manifested not only in the sight of God but also in the sight of men, as an example of honesty and soberness for all those who live with you on the earth. Leave a good remembrance of yourselves both of a Christian life as well as one of human uprightness.

“The Lord is very near! There is no need to worry” (Phil 4: 5-6). The Lord is always near to all those who invoke him with a sincere heart, with an upright faith, with a firm hope, with perfect charity; he in fact knows what we need before we ask him for it: and he is always ready to come to the aid of those who serve him faithfully in every necessity. Therefore we must not worry a great deal about the evils that threaten us, having the certainty that God, our defence, is very near to us as he has said: “The Lord is close to the one who is broken hearted, he saves those who have broken spirits. Many are the misfortunes of the just man, but the Lord frees him from all” (Ps. 33: 19-20). If we make an effort to fulfil and to keep all that which he has commanded us, he will not delay in giving us that which he has promised us.

“But if there is anything that you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving” (Phil 4: 6), in order to face the trials with patience and serenity and never with bitter dissent – may God preserve us – on the contrary “giving thanks continuously in every thing to God the Father” (Ep. 5: 20).

Responsorial. *Ps. 39: 3-4, 2*

R: The Lord has placed my feet on the rock, he has made my steps safe, *
He has put a new song in my mouth.

V: He has heard my cry, he has drawn me out from the pit of death,

R: He has put a new song in my mouth.

YEAR A

Gospel. *Mt. 5: 17 – 37*

A reading from the Gospel of St. Matthew.

"Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

"You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be liable to the hell of fire. So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Make friends quickly with your accuser, while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison; truly, I say to you, you will never get out till you have paid the last penny.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

"It was also said, 'whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that every one who divorces his wife, except on the ground of un-chastity, makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

"Again you have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.' But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil.

Third Reading. *Disc. 1, 9. 21*

In order to keep the innocence in the heart.

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

“For I tell you, if your virtue goes no deeper than that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 5: 20); if you do not observe, that is, not only those minimum precepts of the law which begins to form man, but also these added by me, who has not come to abolish the law but to make it perfect, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

But you will say to me: “If before, speaking of those minimum precepts, he said that whoever would have transgressed one of these and taught others to act like this, would be considered the least in the kingdom of heaven, while whoever would have observed them and would have taught others to do the same would have been considered great – that is that he would already be in the kingdom of heaven from the moment that he was great – what need is there to add other precepts to those minimum of the law, if he who observes them and teaches them can already enter into the kingdom of heaven, because he is great? That sentence: “He instead who will observe them and will teach them to men, will be considered great in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 5: 19) must be interpreted in the sense which I will now tell you.

Let your virtue exceed, he says, that of the scribes and the Pharisees, because if it is not greater you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven. He who transgresses therefore those minimum precepts and teaches others to

do the same will be considered least: he instead who observes those small precepts and in such a way teaches them, is not to be considered greater and more adapt for the kingdom of heaven, but above all not so small as the one who transgresses them. So that he may be great and suitable for the kingdom, he must do and teach as Christ now teaches, it is necessary that his virtue be greater than that of the scribes and the Pharisees.

The virtue of the Pharisees is not to kill; the justice of those who will enter into the kingdom of God is to not get angry without reason. Not to kill therefore is the minimum and he who transgresses it will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. He then who observes it will not be immediately great and adapt for the kingdom of heaven, however he will already rise up some levels.

He will instead be perfect if he was not to get angry without reason; and if he were to observe this he would be far away from killing. For which he who teaches and does not get angry does not transgress the law which commands not to kill, but rather makes it more perfect, so that we keep innocence on the outside not killing, and in the heart by not giving place to anger.

Responsorial. *Prv. 19: 16; Jam. 1: 23*

R: He who keeps the commandments is a keeper of himself; * but he who despises the word shall die.

V: But the man who looks steadily at the perfect law of freedom and makes that his habit –not listening and then forgetting, but actively putting it into practice – will be happy in all that he does.

R: But he who despises the word shall die.

YEAR B

Gospel. *Mk. 1: 40 – 45*

A reading from the Gospel of St. Mark.

And a leper came to him beseeching him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. And he sternly charged him, and sent him away at once, and said to him, "See that you say nothing to

any one; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to the people." But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

Third Reading. *Hom. 25, 1 – 2*

Great is the prudence and the faith of the one who draws near to him.

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

“Lord, if you want, you can heal me” (Mk. 1: 40). The prudence and the faith of this leper who draws near to Christ is great. He does not interrupt his discourse, nor does he make his way through the crowd of listeners, but he waits for the right moment: he draws near when Christ descends from the mountain. And he does not implore him in any kind of way, but with a lot of fervour, prostrating himself at his feet, with sincere faith and with a just opinion of him.

In fact he does not say to him: if you implore God; or: if you were to pray; but: “If you want, you can heal me” (Mk. 1: 40). Nor does he say: Lord, heal me; but he entrusts everything to him, and in this way he bears witness that he is the master of healing or not and he recognizes his complete power.

But what does the Lord, who having often spoken with humility of many things that were not adequate to his glory, say here in order to confirm the opinion of those who looked admiringly at his power? “I want to, be healed” (Mk. 1: 41). Though having accomplished many and such sensational miracles, it does not seem that he had ever spoken as in this circumstance. In reality here, in order to confirm in the people and in the leper the faith in his power, he declares beforehand: “I want to”. Nor does he say it without doing it, but immediately the fact follows the words. He is not satisfied with saying: “I want to, be healed!” but simultaneously “he extended his hand and touched him” (Mk. 1: 42); which thing is worthy of greater reflection. How come, in fact, while he healed through his will and the word, he added the touch of the hand? I think that he had done it only in order to show also in this circumstance that he is not subject to the law, but

above the law; and also how from that moment nothing else would have been impure for the pure.

The Lord in fact had not come only to heal the bodies, but also to lead the souls to the love of wisdom. Therefore as elsewhere he says that it is not prohibited anymore to eat without washing the hands, and as he institutes that excellent law that permits one to feed on any type of food, so also he acts in this case in order to teach that it is necessary to cure the soul keeping it pure, without paying attention to the exterior purification and fearing only the spiritual leprosy which is the sin.

Jesus therefore first of all touches the leper, and no one rebukes him. That court in fact was not corrupt, and the crowd that was spectator to it was not spoilt by envy. Therefore not only did they not criticize him, but, overcome with surprise because of the miracle, they went away admiring his inestimable power that he manifested in words and in deeds. Thus, after having healed the body, he ordered him not to tell anyone, but to show himself to the priest and to make his offering. He did not heal him in a way that there could remain any doubt about his healing; but he ordered him not to tell anyone, in order to teach us to flee from ambition and vainglory. Certainly, he knew that the leper once healed would not have kept quiet but would have spoken to everyone of his benefactor, yet he did all that was in his power in order to impede him. In another circumstance Jesus ordered not to exalt his person, but to give glory to God; thus, while in the case of this leper who was healed he taught us not to exalt ourselves and to flee from vainglory, in other occasions instead he wanted to exhort us to be grateful and mindful of the benefits received: in any case he teaches us to give all praise to God.

Responsorial. *Ps. 17: 4, 3; Jer. 17: 14*

R: Because of your indignation there is nothing healthy in me, because of my sins none of my bones are intact. * Heal me, Lord, and I will be healed, save me, and I will be saved.

V: Your arrows have pierced me, your hand has come down upon me.

R: Heal me, Lord, and I will be healed, save me, and I will be saved.

YEAR C

Gospel. *Lk. 6: 17, 20 – 26*

A reading from the Gospel of St. Luke.

And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: "Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. "Blessed are you that hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. "Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh. "Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, on account of the Son of man! Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for so their fathers did to the prophets.

"But woe to you that are rich, for you have received your consolation. "Woe to you that are full now, for you shall hunger. "Woe to you that laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. "Woe to you, when all men speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

Third Reading. Book 4: 14

Blessed "the beggars" because theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

A reading from the treatise "against Marcione" of Tertullian, presbyter.

I am on the point now of considering the well known affirmation of Christ and, through it, the essence of his doctrine, that is his announcement: "Blessed are the beggars – in this way in fact must the Greek word be interpreted – because theirs is the kingdom of heaven". Already this way, of beginning with the beatitudes, belongs to the Creator, who inaugurated all things, as he himself has revealed, uniquely by stressing the blessing. "My heart pours forth happy words" (Ps. 44: 1): this undoubtedly is the happy message, that of the blessing, from which he, who gives the beginning to the new covenant which is like the old one, is known. There is no need therefore to marvel that his discourse had begun with a similar expression

of the creating Love who always loves, consoles, confirms, protects the beggars, the poor, the humble, the widows and the orphans: do you not believe that this personal benevolence of Christ is that water which gushes out from the springs of the Saviour? (cfr. Is. 12: 3).

“Blessed are you who are hungry now, because you will be satisfied” (Lk. 6: 21).

Since the hungry are none other than the poor and the beggars, he would have been able to use this beatitude as a title in the place of the preceding one, if the Creator had not established exactly that promise as the point of departure of his gospel. Of those whom he would call from the ends of the earth, that is from all the pagan nations, he said through Isaiah that he would come promptly and with agility in as much as they were hurrying towards the end of the ages; with agility, that is without the impediment of the ancient law; and he added: “They will not suffer either hunger or thirst” (Is. 49: 10). Now, the promise of satiety to the hungry belongs to the Creator.

“Blessed are you who mourn now, because you will laugh” (Lk. 6: 21). Examine the words of Isaiah: “Behold, my servants will rejoice and you will remain disappointed; Behold my servants will exult because of the joy of the heart, you will cry because of the suffering of the heart” (Is. 65: 13-14).

We will discover these contrasts in Christ: joy and exultation in the happiness are the sure promise for those who now find themselves in the opposite situation, that is the sad, the poor, the anguished. For this the psalmist also says: “He who sows in tears will reap with joy” (Ps. 125: 5). This is why the Christ, after having begun by announcing the consolation of the poor and of the humble, of the hungry and of the afflicted, wanted immediately to present himself as the one who had been pre-announced through Isaiah: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because the Lord has consecrated me with the anointing; he has sent me to bring the good news to the poor” – “Blessed are you poor because yours is the kingdom of heaven”. “He has sent me to bind up the wounds of the broken hearted” – “Blessed are you who hunger now because you will be satisfied” – “To console the afflicted” – “Blessed are you who cry now because you will laugh” – “To gladden the afflicted in Sion and to give them a crown instead of ashes, oil of gladness instead of the garment of mourning, song of praise instead of a sad heart” (Is. 61: 1-3; Lk. 4: 18-19; 6: 20-21).

Responsorial. *Mt. 5: 6; Ps. 35: 9-10*

R: Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice, because they will be satisfied. * In you is the source of life, in your light we see the light.

V: They will be satisfied with the abundance of your house and they will drink from the torrents of your delights.

R: In you is the source of life, in your light we see the light.

MONDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *1 Cor. 7: 1 – 24*

Questions on marriage.

A reading from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians.

Now concerning the matters about which you wrote. It is well for a man not to touch a woman. But because of the temptation to immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.

The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not rule over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not rule over his own body, but the wife does. Do not refuse one another except perhaps by agreement for a season, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, lest Satan tempt you through lack of self-control. I say this by way of concession, not of command.

I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own special gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.

To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion.

To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband but if she does, let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband -- and that the husband should not divorce his wife.

To the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy.

But if the unbelieving partner desires to separate, let it be so; in such a case the brother or sister is not bound. For God has called us to peace. Wife,

how do you know whether you will save your husband? Husband, how do you know whether you will save your wife?

Only, let every one lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and in which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches. Was any one at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was any one at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. **For neither circumcision counts for anything nor un-circumcision, but keeping the commandments of God.** Every one should remain in the state in which he was called.

Were you a slave when called? Never mind. But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity. For he who was called in the Lord as a slave is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a slave of Christ. You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men. So, brethren, in whatever state each was called, there let him remain with God.

Responsorial. *Mt. 19: 4, 5, 6; cfr. Gen. 2: 24*

R: Man will leave his father and his mother and will unite himself to his wife and the two will be only one flesh. * That which God has joined, man must not separate.

V: The Creator in the beginning created male and female, thus they are not anymore two, but only one flesh.

R: That which God has joined, man must not separate.

Second Reading. *Disc. 37: 2 – 3*

We must all love the Church as our mother.

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

When you hear: “A perfect woman who can find her?” (Pr. 31: 10), do not think that this is said of the Church as if it was hidden, but of the Church that has already been found by One, in such a way, that it does not remain hidden anymore to anyone. And it is described to us so that it may be praised, admired and loved by all as a mother: in fact she is the bride of one only. “A perfect woman who can find her?” And who does not see this woman who is so perfect? She has already been found and placed on high so that all can see her already, glorious, adorned, luminous, diffused in the

whole world. “Her value is much greater than pearls” (Pr. 31: 10) If we think how much men are greedy for precious stones and how much they are worth, how can we find it strange that the Church is said to be more precious than such pearls? Nothing, in fact, can be compared with her.

There are precious stones in her: so precious that we say that they are living. They adorn her, but the Church is even more precious. I would like however to recommend something to you with regard to these precious stones, and I would like you to understand it in the sense which I intend, and that you could understand my fear. There are and always there were precious stones in the Church: learned men, full of knowledge and eloquence and of all knowledge of the divine law. There is no doubt that they are stones that are truly precious. But some of them have been detached from the necklace of this woman. A precious stone for the doctrine was Cyprian, shining for eloquence -. And it was the doctrine of the Lord that gave him splendour – and he remained in her necklace. A precious stone was Donato, but he detached himself. A precious stone, if it does not remain set in the jewel, falls into the darkness. It was necessary that it remained in the necklace of this woman, attached to it. I would say in fact: faithfully!

Precious stones, are in other words stones of great price. But he who does not have charity is already devalued, he has lost his value. He may also boast of his doctrine, he may also boast of his eloquence; listen rather to the one who is capable of valuing the authenticity of the stones of this woman, listen – I say – to what an expert artificer of necklaces thinks. Why boast of the eloquence of a stone that is not precious anymore but already devalued? “If even”, says the Apostle “I was to speak the language of men and of angels, but if I did not have love, I am a resounding bronze, or a cymbal that tinkles” (1 Cor. 13: 1). Where is that stone? It does not shine anymore, it tinkles. Learn therefore to recognize the authenticity of the stones, you who want to gain the kingdom of heaven.

Let no stone which is not mounted in the jewel of this woman dazzle you. In her, who is more precious than the stones themselves, is all the value of the jewel.

Responsorial. *Is. 54: 12, 11*

R: Your entire city walls will be of precious stones. * I will make the battlements of Jerusalem with rubies.

V: Behold I place your stones on malachite and your foundations on sapphires.

R: I will make the battlements of Jerusalem with rubies.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *1 Thes. 2:13- 3:13*

Friendship between Paul and the Thessalonians.

A reading from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians.

And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you believers.

For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus which are in Judea; for you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews, who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out, and displease God and oppose all men by hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles that they may be saved -- so as always to fill up the measure of their sins. But God's wrath has come upon them at last!

But since we were bereft of you, brethren, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavoured the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face; because we wanted to come to you -- I, Paul, again and again -- but Satan hindered us. For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy.

Therefore when we could bear it no longer, we were willing to be left behind at Athens alone, and we sent Timothy, our brother and God's servant in the gospel of Christ, to establish you in your faith and to exhort you, that no one be moved by these afflictions. You yourselves know that this is to be our lot. For when we were with you, we told you beforehand that we were to suffer affliction; just as it has come to pass, and as you know. For this reason, when I could bear it no longer, I sent that I might know your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and that our labour would be in vain.

But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you -- for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we have been comforted about you through your faith; for now we live, if you stand fast in the Lord.

For what thanksgiving can we render to God for you, for all the joy which we feel for your sake before our God, praying earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith?

Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you; and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all men, as we do to you, so that he may establish your hearts un-blameable in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.

Responsorial. *1 Thes. 3: 12, 13; 2 Thes. 2: 16-17*

R: May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else * so that you may be steady and irreprehensible in holiness.

V: May our Lord Jesus Christ himself comfort your hearts and confirm them,

R: so that you may be steady and irreprehensible in holiness.

Second Reading. *Ps. 132*

All the believers had only one heart and one soul.

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

"Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity" (Ps. 132: 1). It is good and pleasant for brothers to dwell in unity because when they dwell in unity they are gathered in the community of the Church; when they are called brothers they are of one heart in the charity of a single will.

At the preaching of the apostles, we read that this was the great precept, summed up in the words: "The company of those who believed were of one heart and soul" (Act. 4: 32). It is fitting then, for the people of God to be brothers under one Father, to be one under one Spirit, to enter

with one mind under the same roof, under one head to be members of one body.

It is good and pleasant when brothers dwell in unity. And the prophet uses a simile to illustrate that goodness and pleasantness, “It is like precious oil upon the head, running down upon the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes” (Ps. 132: 2). By that oil, made up of perfumes, Aaron was anointed to the priesthood. It was God’s good pleasure that this be the anointing of his first priest. And we know that our Lord, too, was invisibly anointed when it is said, “Your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness”(Ps. 44: 8). That anointing is not a material thing, he was anointed not with a horn of oil as kings are, but with the oil of gladness. Furthermore, after this anointing Aaron was called according to law, the Christ, the anointed one.

And since wherever it is poured out, this oil quenches the unclean spirits of the heart, so through the anointing of charity we breathe forth to God a sweet odour, as the Apostle says, “we are the aroma of Christ” (2 Cor. 2: 15). Just as this oil was pleasing to God in his first priest, so it is good and pleasant for brothers to dwell in unity.

The oil ran down from the head into the beard. Now a beard is an ornament of adult manhood. For we must not be little children in Christ except as it is written, we should “be babes in evil not in thinking”. The Apostle calls all who do not have faith ‘babes’ since they are not strong enough for solid food and still need milk, as he says, “I fed you with milk, not solid food; for you were not ready for it; and even yet you are not ready” (1 Cor. 3: 2). We instead must be adults.

Responsorial. *Rm. 12. 5; Ep. 4: 7; 1 Cor. 12: 13*

R: All of us in union with Christ, form one body, and as parts of it we belong to each other. * Each one of us, however, has been given his own share of grace, given as Christ allotted it.

V: In the one Spirit we were all baptised, and one Spirit was given to us all to drink.

R: Each one of us, however, has been given his own share of grace, given as Christ allotted it.

Gospel. *Mk. 8: 11 – 13*

Why does this generation ask for a sign?

A reading from the Gospel of St. Mark.

The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, seeking from him a sign from heaven, to test him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit, and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Truly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation." And he left them, and getting into the boat again he departed to the other side.

TUESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *1 Cor. 7: 25 – 40*

Virginity and marriage.

A reading from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians.

Now concerning the unmarried, I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. I think that in view of the present distress it is well for a person to remain as he is. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek marriage. But if you marry, you do not sin, and if a girl marries she does not sin. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles, and I would spare you that.

I mean, brethren, the appointed time has grown very short; from now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the form of this world is passing away.

I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to please the Lord; but the married man is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried woman or girl is anxious about the affairs of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit; but the married woman is anxious about worldly affairs, how to please her husband.

I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.

If any one thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry -- it is no sin. But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well. So that he who marries his betrothed does well; and he who refrains from marriage will do better. A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. If the husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. But in

my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is. And I think that I have the Spirit of God.

Responsorial. *1 Cor. 7: 29, 31; 1 Jn. 2: 15*

R: The time is short: from now onwards, those who deal with the world must live as though they had no dealings with it, * for the form of this world is passing away.

V: Do not love the world, or the things of the world!

R: For the form of this world is passing away.

Second Reading. *Disc. 90: 2 – 3*

The time is short.

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

And lest we should be led by despair into sheer inaction, He promises that the Divine power shall make those things possible which are to man impossible from his own lack of power: “for narrow and straight is the way which leads unto life,” (Mt. 7: 14) and no one could set foot on it, no one could advance one step, unless Christ by making Himself the Way unbarred the difficulties of approach: and thus the Ordainer of the journey becomes the Means whereby we are able to accomplish it, because not only does He impose the labour, but also brings us to the haven of rest. In Him therefore we find our Model of patience, in whom we have our Hope of life eternal; for “if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him,” (2 Tm. 2: 12) since, as the Apostle says, “he who says that he abides in Christ ought himself also to walk as He walked.” (1 Jn. 2: 6). Otherwise our profession of faith would be false, if we were not to follow His precepts, Whose name we glory in, and assuredly they would not be irksome to us, but would free us from all dangers, if we loved nothing but what He commanded us to love.

For there are two loves from which precede all wishes, as different in quality as they are different in their sources. For the reasonable soul, which cannot exist without love, is the lover either of GOD or the world. In the love of GOD there is no excess, but in the love of the world all is hurtful. And therefore we must cling inseparably to eternal treasures, but temporal things we must use like passers-by, that as we are sojourners hastening to return to our own land, all the good things of this world which meet us may

be as aids on the way, not snares to detain us. Therefore the blessed Apostle makes this proclamation, “the time is short: it remains that those who have wives live as though they had none; and those who weep, as though they wept not; and those who rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and those who buy, as though they possessed not; and those that use this world, as though they used it not. For the fashion of this world passes away.” (1 Cor. 7: 29-31). But as the world attracts us with its appearance, and abundance and variety, it is not easy to turn away from it unless in the beauty of visible things the Creator rather than the creature is loved; for, when He says, “you shall love the LORD your GOD with all your heart, and with all your mind, and with all your strength,” (Deut. 6: 5) **He wishes us in nothing to loosen ourselves from the bonds of His love.** And when He links the love of our neighbour also to this command, He enjoins on us the imitation of His own goodness, that we should love what He loves and do what He does.

For although we be “GOD’s field and GOD’s building,” (1 Cor. 3: 9) and “neither is he that plants anything, nor he that waters, but GOD that gives the growth,” (1 Cor. 3: 7) yet in all things He requires our ministry and service, and wishes us to be the stewards of His gifts, that he who bears GOD’s image may do GOD’s will. For this reason, in the Lord’s Prayer we say most devoutly, “Your Kingdom come, your will be done as in heaven, so also on earth.” (Mt. 6: 10). For what else do we ask for in these words but that GOD may subdue those whom He has not yet subdued, and as in heaven He makes the angels ministers of His will, so also on earth He may make men? And in seeking this we love GOD, we love also our neighbour: and the love within us has but one Object, since we desire the bondservant to serve and the LORD to rule.

Responsorial. Rm. 8: 23

R: We who possess the first fruits of the Spirit * groan unceasingly, waiting for the adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

V: We are foreigners in front of you and pilgrims like all our fathers;

R: we groan unceasingly, waiting for the adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *1 Thes. 4: 1 – 18*

Sanctification and hope in the resurrection.

A reading from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians.

Finally, brethren, we beseech and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you learned from us how you ought to live and to please God, just as you are doing, you do so more and more. For you know what instructions we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from un-chastity; that each one of you know how to take a wife for himself in holiness and honour, not in the passion of lust like heathens who do not know God; that no man transgress, and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we solemnly forewarned you. For God has not called us for uncleanness, but in holiness. Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you.

But concerning love of the brethren you have no need to have any one write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do love all the brethren throughout Macedonia. But we exhort you, brethren, to do so more and more, to aspire to live quietly, to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we charged you; so that you may command the respect of outsiders, and be dependent on nobody.

But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you may not grieve 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. For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. 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 first; then we who are alive, who are left, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Responsorial. *1 Thes. 4: 16; Mk. 13: 27; cfr. Mt. 24: 31*

R: 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 he will gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

V: When the Son of man will come, he will send his angels with a great trumpet,

R: and he will gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

Second Reading. Hom. 6

Let us behave in a way that we can live with Christ always.

A reading from the “Homilies on some passages of the New Testament” of St. John Chrysostom, bishop.

He had promised the resurrection of the bodies, immortality, the encounter in heaven, the taking up on the clouds: these realities he demonstrates to us with facts. And in what way? After death he rose and for forty days he remained with the apostles, in order to harden their certainty and to show them how our bodies will be after the resurrection. Besides, he who had said through Paul: “We will be taken up into the clouds in order to meet the Lord in the air”, demonstrated this also. In fact after the resurrection, on the point of ascending into heaven, “he was lifted up on high, in their sight and a cloud covered him from their gaze. And they were gazing into heaven while he went up from them” (Act. 1: 9-10). Thus, our body also will be consubstantial to his being of the same nature: as in fact is the head so also will be the body, as the beginning, so also the end. Making a clear reference to this, Paul said that he “will transform our miserable body in order to conform it to his glorious body” (Phil. 3: 21).

If it is conformed, it will go along the same way and will be lifted up in the same way up above the clouds. And since until then the word of the kingdom of heaven had been hidden for those who heard it, he therefore when he went up the mountain was transfigured in front of the eyes of his disciples, showing them beforehand the future glory and, in a hidden way, what our body would be.

Dearest beloved, examine this reality, and instructed by the Word and by that which we have seen, let us behave in a way that, taken up into the clouds, we may always live with him and, saved through his grace, we may

enjoy the future goods. May it be granted to us to attain all this in Christ Jesus our Lord, with him to the Father and to the Holy Spirit be glory, dominion, honour, adoration now and forever and ever. Amen.

Responsorial. *Heb. 10: 37-38; Jn. 3: 36*

R: For in just a very little while, He who is coming will come and will not delay; * But my righteous one will live by faith.

V: He who does not obey the Son will not see the life, but the anger of God will hang over him.

R: But my righteous one will live by faith.

Gospel. *Mk. 8: 14 – 21*

Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Herod.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Mark.

Now they had forgotten to bring bread; and they had only one loaf with them in the boat. And he cautioned them, saying, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod." And they discussed it with one another, saying, "We have no bread." And being aware of it, Jesus said to them, "Why do you discuss the fact that you have no bread? Do you not yet perceive or understand? Are your hearts hardened? Having eyes do you not see, and having ears do you not hear? And do you not remember? When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" They said to him, "Twelve." "And the seven for the four thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces did you take up?" And they said to him, "Seven." And he said to them, "Do you not yet understand?"

WEDNESDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *1 Cor. 8: 1 – 13*

On immolated flesh.

A reading from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians.

Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." "Knowledge" puffs up, but love builds up. If any one imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if one loves God, one is known by him.

Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no God but one." For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth -- as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords" -- yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through being hitherto accustomed to idols, eat food as really offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do.

Only take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. For if any one sees you, a man of knowledge, at table in an idol's temple, might he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols? And so by your knowledge this weak man is destroyed, a brother for whom Christ died.

Thus, sinning against your brethren and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food is a cause of my brother's falling, I will never eat meat, lest I cause my brother to fall.

Responsorial. *1 Cor. 8: 5, 6, 4*

R: For although there may be so called gods in heaven or on earth, yet for us there is one God, the Father, * and only one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

V: We know that there does not exist any idol in the world and that there is only one God,

R: and only one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

Second Reading. *Book 6*

Jesus Himself is the prize and crown for those who fight.

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

Those who have reached the love of Christ and of virtue are ready to sustain persecutions also and, if it is necessary, they do not refuse exile and accept with joy even the most shameful insults, in the certainty of the great and most precious rewards prepared for them in heaven.

The love towards the Lord, remunerator of the battle, produces this also: it infuses the faith in the rewards that we do not see here as yet and strengthens the hope of the future goods. It makes those who meditate and contemplate Christ wise, and it turns them moved towards the human misery that they know well. It makes them meek, just, modest, human, instruments of love and of peace, so attached to Christ and to virtue, that for this they not only are ready to suffer, but they bear serenely the insults and exult in the persecutions. In brief, from such meditation, we also can draw very great benefits and find happiness for ourselves. Thus, in the Lord totally good, we can keep the mind pure, the splendour of virtue intact, make our souls better, preserve the riches received in the sacraments, maintain the royal tunic neat and intact.

As the control of oneself and the good use of the reason is characteristic of the human nature, so also we must recognize that the meditation of Christ must be the persistent occupation of our mind. All the more because the model to which men must look is only Jesus, whether it refers to themselves or the help that they have to give to others. He only can show men the true justice, be it towards themselves, as well as in relation with the others. He himself then is the reward and crown for those who fight.

It is he therefore whom we must keep in front of our eyes meditating as attentively as possible on his life, in order to learn from him how we must suffer. In the race prizes are proposed to the athletes: aiming towards them they face the test, and the greater the effort the more beautiful the prizes. Other than this, who does not know that he alone wanted to ransom us with his blood? For which there is no other whom we must serve and for whom

to spend all of ourselves: body, soul, love, memory and every other activity of the mind. Therefore Paul said: "You do not belong to yourselves, in fact you have been bought at a price" (1 Cor. 6: 19-20).

Responsorial. *Act. 13: 48-49*

R: The pagans rejoiced on hearing the word of God * and all those who were destined for eternal life embraced the faith.

V: The word of God spread,

R: and all those who were destined for eternal life embraced the faith.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *1 Thes. 5: 1 – 28*

Children of the light.

A reading from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians.

But as to the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When people say, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as travail comes upon a woman with child, and there will be no escape.

But you are not in darkness, brethren, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all sons of light and sons of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober. For those who sleep do so at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. But, since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that whether we wake or sleep we might live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing. But we beseech you, brethren, to

respect those who labour among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves. And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the idlers, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all.

See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying, but test everything; hold fast what is good, abstain from every form of evil.

May the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, and he will do it. Brethren, pray for us.

Greet all the brethren with a holy kiss. I adjure you by the Lord that this letter be read to all the brethren. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Responsorial. *1 Thes. 5: 9-10; Col. 1: 13*

R: For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, * so that we might live together with him.

V: God has freed us from the power of darkness and has transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son,

R: so that we might live together with him

Second Reading. *Cc. 6:26, 27, 30*

The science of the discernment of the spirits is acquired with wisdom.

A reading from the “Chapters on spiritual perfection” of Diadochus of Photike, bishop.

To distinguish good from evil without error is a light of true knowledge; for then the way of justice, which leads the spirit toward the Sun of justice, brings it into the infinite illumination of knowledge, because henceforth it seeks resolutely for love.

Indeed those who struggle must ceaselessly maintain calmness of thought: thus the mind will be able to discriminate between the suggestions which pass through it and will place those which are good and come from God in the treasure house of memory, while it will eject from this natural reservoir those which are evil and come from the devil. When the sea is calm, fishermen perceive the movement of its depths to such a point that hardly any of the creatures that move along its tracks escapes them; but when the sea is tossed about by winds it hides in its sombre movement what it readily reveals in the smiling surface of its tranquillity. And then we see that the art of those who practise the wiles of fishing is of no effect.

To the Holy Spirit alone does it belong to purify the spirit, for unless the strong man comes in to despoil the thief the spoils will by no means be recovered (cfr. Lk. 11: 22). We must therefore by all possible means, and especially through peace of soul, offer a resting place for the Holy Spirit, in order to have the lamp of knowledge always shining in us; for if it shines endlessly in the innermost recesses of the soul, not only will all these harsh and sombre insinuations of the demons be shown up, but, still more, they will be considerably weakened, confused by this holy and glorious light.

For that reason the apostle tells us: “Do not quench the Spirit” (1 Thes. 5: 19), which means: Do not, through your evil deeds and your evil thoughts, grieve the goodness of the Holy Spirit, lest you deprive yourself of the help of this brightness. For what is eternal and life giving is not extinguished: but its sadness, that is to say, its departure, abandons the spirit in darkness, without the light of knowledge.

The spiritual sense is an exact taste of the things that we discern. Just as, in fact, through our bodily sense of taste, when we are doing well, we distinguish unmistakably the good from the bad, and desire what is useful, so, in the same way, our spirit, when it begins to move vigorously in all quietude, is able to feel in all its fullness the divine consolation, without ever being led astray by whatever is hostile to it. Through the action of love the spirit retains an unfading memory of this taste, discerning infallibly what is best, according to St. Paul’s words: “and it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent” (Phil 1: 9-10).

Responsorial. *Cfr. Tob. 4. 19; 14: 8, 9*

R: Praise the Lord God at all times and ask him to guide your course, * then all you do and all you plan will turn out well.

V: Do what pleases him at all times, in sincerity and with all your strength,

R: then all you do and all you plan will turn out well.

Gospel. *Mk. 8: 22 – 26*

The blind man was cured and saw everything clearly.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Mark.

And they came to Beth-sa'ida. And some people brought to him a blind man, and begged him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the village; and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands upon him, he asked him, "Do you see anything?" And he looked up and said, "I see men; but they look like trees, walking." Then again he laid his hands upon his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored, and saw everything clearly. And he sent him away to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village."

THURSDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *1 Cor. 9: 1 – 18*

Freedom and charity of Paul.

A reading from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians.

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are not you my workmanship in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you; for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. This is my defence to those who would examine me. Do we not have the right to our food and drink? Do we not have the right to be accompanied by a believing wife, as the other apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas? Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living?

Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Who tends a flock without getting some of the milk? Do I say this on human authority? Does not the law say the same? For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the ploughman should plough in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of a share in the crop.

If we have sown spiritual good among you, is it too much if we reap your material benefits? If others share this rightful claim upon you, do not we still more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings?

In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.

But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing this to secure any such provision. For I would rather die than have any one deprive me of my ground for boasting. For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not

preach the gospel! For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. What then is my reward? Just this: that in my preaching I may make the gospel free of charge, not making full use of my right in the gospel.

Responsorial. *1 Cor. 9: 16, 2*

R: For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting; it is a duty. * Woe to me if I did not preach the gospel.

V: Even if for the others I am not an apostle, at least for you I am; you are the seal of my apostolate in the Lord.

R: Woe to me if I did not preach the gospel

Second Reading. *Book 4*

The apostles announce joy to the world.

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

Rejoice, O heavens, because the Lord has pity on Israel (cfr. Is. 49: 13). Sound the trumpet, O foundations of the earth (cfr. Is. 40: 21 Vulg.). While the heavens rejoice because God has had pity on Israel, not only the Israel of the flesh but also the spiritual one, the foundations of the earth sound their trumpets, (that is the ministers of the evangelical announcement, whose most clear voice is diffused everywhere almost like sacred trumpets announcing to all the glory of the Saviour), and call to the knowledge of Christ all those who come from the circumcision, as well as those who before offered their cult to the creatures instead of to the Creator. But why does he call them the foundation of the earth? The foundation and solid base of all is Christ, who governs and sustains all things so that they may be stable: in him, all of us are erected as a spiritual building, raised up by the work of the Spirit into the holy temple in which he lives (cfr. Ep. 2: 21). Through faith, in fact, Christ lives in our hearts.

The apostles and evangelists, eyewitnesses and ministers of his word for the confirmation of the faith, can be considered as a foundation that is closer to us. If we were to know how to follow their teaching, we would maintain a faith that is safe from all alteration or deviation. To Peter, who through infused wisdom confessed his faith saying: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt. 16: 18) he answered: “You are Peter, and on

this rock I will build my Church” (Mt. 16: 18), calling rock, I think, the unyielding faith of the disciple. The psalmist also said: “Her foundations are on the holy mountains” (Ps. 86: 1). Rightly are the apostles and evangelists compared to mountains, because their doctrine is as solid as a foundation for posterity and there is no danger, for those who remain in their nets of deviating from the faith. Marvellous and exemplary and illustrious for their words and works were in fact the holy apostles. Messengers of the gospel and ministers of the mysteries of Christ, they announced to the world the happiness. Where, in fact, there is the forgiveness of sin and the justification that comes from the faith, the participation in the Holy and the splendour of adoption, the kingdom of heaven and the sure hope of goods that the intelligence does not manage even to imagine, there there is also a happiness and an inextinguishable joy.

Responsorial. *Act. 13: 48, 49*

R: The pagans rejoiced and glorified the word of God * and all those who were destined for eternal life embraced the faith.

V: The word of God spread;

R: and all those who were destined for eternal life embraced the faith.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *2 Th. 1:1-12*

Greetings and thanksgiving.

Beginning of the Second Letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians.

Paul, Silva'nus, and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren, as is fitting, because your faith is growing abundantly, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing. Therefore we ourselves boast of you in the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith in all your persecutions and in the afflictions that you are enduring. This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be made worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering -- since indeed God deems it just to repay with affliction those

who afflict you, and to grant rest with us to you who are afflicted, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marvelled at in all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his call, and may fulfil every good resolve and work of faith by his power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Responsorial. *Cfr. 2 Thes. 1: 10; Ps. 144: 17*

R: When the Lord will come to be glorified in his saints, * he will be marvelled at in all who have believed.

V: The Lord is just in all his ways, holy in all his works:

R: he will be marvelled at in all who have believed.

Second Reading. *Cat. 13:1,3,6,23*

May the cross be your joy even in times of persecution.

A reading from the “Catechesis” of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, bishop.

Every deed of Christ is a cause of glorying to the Catholic Church, but her greatest of all glorying is in the Cross; and knowing this, Paul says, ‘But God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of Christ’ (Gal. 6: 14).

For wondrous indeed it was, that one who was blind from his birth should receive sight in Siloam; but what is this compared with the blind of the whole world? A great thing it was, and beyond nature, for Lazarus to rise again on the fourth day; but the grace extended to him alone, and what was it compared with the dead in sins throughout the world? Marvellous it was, that five loaves should pour forth food for the five thousand; but what is that to those who are famishing in ignorance through the entire world? It was marvellous that she should have been loosed who had been bound by Satan eighteen years: yet what is this to all of us, who were fast bound in the chains of our sins?

But the glory of the Cross led those who were blind through ignorance into light, loosed all who were held fast by sin, and ransomed the whole world of mankind.

Let us then not be ashamed of the Cross of our Saviour, but rather glory in it. 'For the word of the Cross is unto Jews a stumbling block, and unto Gentiles foolishness' (1 Cor. 1. 18, 23), but to us salvation: and to them that are perishing it is foolishness, but unto us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it was not a mere man who died for us, as I said before, but the Son of God, God made man.

Further; if the lamb under Moses drove the destroyer far away, did not much rather the 'Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world', deliver us from our sins? The blood of a brute sheep gave salvation; and shall not the Blood of the Only begotten much rather save? He gave not up His life by compulsion, nor was He put to death by murderous violence, but of His own accord. Hear what He says: 'I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again' (cfr. Jn. 10: 18). He came therefore of His own set purpose to His passion, rejoicing in His noble deed, smiling at the crown, cheered by the salvation of mankind; not ashamed of the Cross, for it was to save the world. For it was no common man who suffered, but God in man's nature, striving for the prize of His patience.

Do not rejoice in the cross in time of peace only, but hold fast to the same faith in time of persecution also; do not be a friend of Jesus in time of peace and his foe in time of wars. You receive now the remission of your sins, and the gifts of the king's spiritual bounty; when war shall come strive nobly for your king. Jesus, the sinless was crucified for you; and will you not be crucified for him who was crucified for you? You are not bestowing a favour, for you have first received; but you are returning a favour, repaying your debt to him who was crucified for you on Golgotha.

Responsorial. *1 Cor. 1: 18, 23*

R: To those who court their own ruin, the message of the cross is folly; * to us who are on the way to salvation, it is the evidence of God's power.

V: What we preach is Christ crucified, to the Jews a discouragement, to the Gentiles mere folly;

R: to us who are on the way to salvation, it is the evidence of God's power.

Gospel. *Mk. 8: 27-33*

You are the Christ. The Son of man has to suffer a lot.
A reading from the Gospel of St. Mark.

And Jesus went on with his disciples, to the villages of Caesare'a Philip'pi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do men say that I am?" And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." And he charged them to tell no one about him.

And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he said this plainly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter, and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not on the side of God, but of men."

FRIDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *1 Cor. 9: 19-27*

The good example of Paul.

A reading from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians.

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews; to those under the law I became as one under the law -- though not being myself under the law -- that I might win those under the law.

To those outside the law I became as one outside the law -- not being without law toward God but under the law of Christ -- that I might win those outside the law.

To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

Do you not know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

Well, I do not run aimlessly, I do not box as one beating the air; but I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

Responsorial. *1 Cor. 9: 19, 22; cfr. Sir. 24: 32*

R: For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, that I might win the more. * I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

V: You see that I have not worked only for myself, but for all those who search for the truth.

R: I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

Second Reading. *Treatise 12*

Be servants of the servants.

A reading from the treatise “To the presbyters” of Baldwin of Canterbury, bishop.

You, leaders and shepherds of souls, among the things to be done, reflect above all on how difficult it is to rule over the souls, to adapt oneself to the temperament of each one, to conform oneself to all in a way that there is no difference between you and the servants, even if you are a leader of all.

For this, he who is the greatest among you, in order to adapt himself to the smallest, must not hesitate to let himself be called servant of the servants of God.

The Apostle shows us the duty of this service when he says: “Though being free from all, I have made myself the servant of everyone in order to win over the greater number” (1 Cor. 9: 19). How necessary it is to do this is seen also in that which is written: “The greater you are, the more you must humiliate yourself” (Sir. 3: 18). Every rank is not worthy of such a name if it disdains the humble things. Humility is the source and guardian of authority.

Those who exercise authority must try therefore to show themselves humble in everything, following the example of Christ, master of humility; who from Lord that he was made himself servant and, though being the first, he wanted to show himself as the last, to the point of kneeling down at the feet of the disciples. With the strong example of his humility, Christ pushes us towards humble things, up to the point of being servants also of the servants. Therefore “your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but emptied himself taking the very nature of a servant” (Phil. 2: 5-7).

And even if you are gods (cfr. Ps. 81: 6), humble yourselves and assume the condition of servants, becoming at the same time men for the men, weak for the weak, and take upon yourselves the necessities and the infirmities of everyone, like Paul who said: “Who is weak and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not inwardly burn?” (2Cor. 11: 29). It is necessary that you suffer more than everyone else, because it is for everyone that you suffer.

If you love Christ, love also justice. He in fact: “by the work of God has been made wisdom and justice for us” (1 Cor. 1: 30) when, though not

knowing sin, he made himself sin for us, so that in him we could become the grace of God (cfr. 1 Cor. 5: 21). Christ has made himself the victim for sin, and, like the good shepherd, he has given his life for his sheep, “leaving you the example so that you may follow his footsteps” (1 Pet. 2: 21). With his blood Christ acquired the Church for himself and, in order to show the excess of love with which he loved, he poured it out for her and thus diffused charity. Paid at such a price, so dear, so loved, he has recommended her to you, he has entrusted her to you, trusting you, so that through you the heart of the bridegroom could confide in her (cfr. Prv. 31: 11). Therefore, in the same measure in which you love Christ and he can confide in you, guard your bride in the faith, jealous of her, not for you but for him, in order to present her “as a pure virgin” (2 Cor. 11: 2) to her bridegroom Christ, our Lord, who above all is God blessed for ever. Amen.

Responsorial. *Sir. 32: 12; Mk. 9: 35*

R: They have put you as a leader? Do not exalt yourself: * Behave with the others as one of them: think of them.

V: If anyone wants to be first, let him be the last of all and the servant of everyone.

R: Behave with the others as one of them: think of them.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *2 Th. 2:1-17*

The day of the Lord.

A reading from the Second Letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians.

Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling to meet him, we beg you, brethren, not to be quickly shaken in mind or excited, either by spirit or by word, or by letter purporting to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come. Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you this? And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, and the Lord Jesus will slay him with the breath of his mouth and destroy him by his appearing and his coming. The coming of the lawless one by the activity of Satan will be with all power and with pretended signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are to perish, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

Therefore God sends upon them a strong delusion, to make them believe what is false, so that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God chose you from the beginning to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brethren, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by word of mouth or by letter. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.

Responsorial. *Mt. 24: 30; 2 Thes. 2: 8*

R: The sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven, * and they will see the Son of man coming with great power and glory.

V: Only then will the wicked be revealed and the Lord Jesus will destroy him with the breath of his mouth.

R: And they will see the Son of man coming with great power and glory.

Second Reading. *Hom. 18: 7 – 11*

May you be filled with the fullness of Christ.

A reading from the Homilies” of a spiritual author of the fourth century.

Those who by God’s gracious gift have become his children, born again from above of his Holy Spirit, possessing Christ within themselves to

illuminate and recreate them, are guided in the many and varied ways of the Spirit, as grace works in their hearts invisibly and in peace of soul.

Sometimes, they are, as it were, in grief and lamentation for the human race, and pouring out prayers for the whole race of Adam, they give way to tears and grief, burning with the love of the Spirit for mankind.

At another time they are inflamed by the Spirit with such joy and love that, were it possible, they would take all mankind, good and bad alike, into their hearts.

Then again, they are thrust down below all men in the humility of the Spirit so that they look on themselves as the most abject and least of all.

At other times the Spirit in a joy beyond words sustains them.

Sometimes, they are like some strong men, who, clad in the full panoply of royal armour and going down to battle, fight strongly against his enemies and overcome them. In the same way, the spiritual man takes up the heavenly arms of the Spirit, attacks the enemy, does battle and brings him into submission beneath his feet.

At another time the soul rests in a most profound, untroubled silence and peace, and has its being only in the joys of the Spirit, in a serenity beyond words and in a true well-being.

Sometimes it is instructed by grace in a certain way of understanding and wisdom beyond words, and in the un-searchable knowledge of the Spirit, in matters that neither tongue nor lips can express.

Again at other times it is like any other human being.

In so many varied ways grace has its effect in these people and guides each soul by different means. Grace gives newness of life as God wills and exercises the soul in different ways so that it may be restored to the heavenly Father in integrity, blameless and purified.

Let us then pray to God, with faith working through love and hope, that he may grant us the heavenly grace of the gift of the Spirit; that the Spirit may guide us and lead us into the fullness of God's will and restore us by his manifold ways of quiet; and that with the help of this guidance and working of grace and spiritual advancement we may be found worthy to attain to the perfection of the fullness of Christ, as the Apostle says, 'that you may be filled with all the fullness of Christ '.

Responsorial. *1 Jn. 2: 20, 27; Joel. 2: 23*

R: You have been anointed by the Holy One, and you have not lost the anointing that he gave you, * and you do not need anyone to teach you: the anointing he gave teaches you everything.

V: Be glad and rejoice in the Lord your God for he has given you a teacher of justice,

R: and you do not need anyone to teach you: the anointing he gave teaches you everything.

Gospel. Mk. 8: 34- 9:1

*He who loses his life for the cause of the Gospel and for me, will
save it.*

A reading from the Gospel of St. Mark.

And he called to him the multitude with his disciples, and said to them, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it. For what does it profit a man, to gain the whole world and forfeit his life? For what can a man give in return for his life? For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." And he said to them, "Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power."

SATURDAY

CYCLE 1

First Reading. *1 Cor. 10:1-14*

The history of Israel as an example for us.

A reading from the First Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians.

I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same supernatural food and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless with most of them God was not pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Now these things are warnings for us, not to desire evil as they did. Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to dance." We must not indulge in immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put the Lord to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents; nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come.

Therefore let any one who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. Therefore, my beloved, shun the worship of idols.

Responsorial. *1 Cor. 10: 1, 2, 11, 3, 4*

R: Our fathers all crossed the sea, and all were baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. * All these things however happened to them as an example.

V: All ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink.

R: All these things however happened to them as an example.

Second Reading. *Treatise 45: 9*

The times change, not faith.

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

Before the advent of our Lord Jesus Christ, when He came in humility in the flesh, righteous men preceded, believing in the same way in Him who was to come, as we believe in Him who has come. Times vary, but not faith. For verbs themselves also vary with the tense, when they are variously declined. He is to come, has one sound; He has come, has another: there is a change in the sound between He is to come, and He has come: yet the same faith unites both, — both those who believed that He would come, and those who have believed that He is come. At different times, indeed, but by the one doorway of faith, that is, by Christ, do we see that both have entered.

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin, that He came in the flesh, suffered, rose again, ascended into heaven: all this, just as you hear verbs of the past tense, we believe to be already fulfilled. In that faith a partnership is also held with us by those fathers who believed that He would be born of the Virgin, would suffer, would rise again, would ascend into heaven; for to such the apostle pointed when he said, “But we having the same spirit of faith, according to as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak.” (2 Cor. 4: 13). The prophet said, “I believed, therefore have I spoken.” (Ps. 115: 10 Vulg.) the apostle says, “We also believe, and therefore speak.”

But to let you know that their faith is one, listen to him saying, “Having the same spirit of faith, we also believe.” (2 Cor. 4: 13). So also in another place, “For I would not have you ignorant, brethren, how all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea: and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink.” (1 Cor. 10: 1-4). The Red Sea signifies baptism; Moses, their leader through the Red Sea, signifies Christ; the people, who passed through, signify believers; the death of the Egyptians signifies the abolition of sins. Under different signs there is the same faith. It is with different signs as with different words [verbs]; for verbs change their sounds through the tenses, and verbs are indeed nothing else than signs. For they are words because of what they signify: take away the meaning from a word, and it becomes a senseless sound. All, therefore, have become signs.

Was not the same faith theirs by whom these signs were employed, and by whom were foretold in prophecy the very things that we believe? Certainly it was: but they believed that they were yet to come, and we, that they have come. In like manner does he also say, “They all drank the same spiritual drink;” “the same spiritual,” for it was not the same material [drink]. For what was it they drank? “For they drank of the spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ.” (1 Cor. 10: 4). See, then, how that while the faith remained, the signs were varied. There the rock was Christ; to us that is Christ which is placed on the altar of God. And they, as a great sacramental sign of the same Christ, drank the water flowing from the rock: what we drink is known to believers. If one’s thoughts turn to the visible form, the thing is different; if to the meaning that addresses the understanding, they drank the same spiritual drink. As many, then, at that time as believed, whether Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob, or Moses, or the other patriarchs or prophets who foretold of Christ, were sheep, and heard Christ. His voice, and not another’s, did they hear.

Responsorial. *Act. 4: 12; 1 Cor. 3: 11*

R: Salvation is found in no one else, * for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

V: No one can place a foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ;

R: for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.

CYCLE 2

First Reading. *2 Th. 3: 1-18*

Exhortations and advice.

A reading from the Second Letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians.

Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed on and triumph, as it did among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men; for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from evil.

And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is living in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, we did not eat any one's bread without paying, but with toil and labour we worked night and day, that we might not burden any of you.

It was not because we have not that right, but to give you in our conduct an example to imitate. For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: If any one will not work, let him not eat. For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work in quietness and to earn their own living.

Brethren, do not be weary in well doing. If any one refuses to obey what we say in this letter, note that man, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed. Do not look on him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

Now may the Lord of peace himself give you peace at all times in all ways. The Lord be with you all.

I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the mark in every letter of mine; it is the way I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Responsorial. *1 Thes. 2: 13; Ep. 1: 13*

R: Having received the divine word from us, * you have welcomed it not as a word of men, but, as it actually is, the word of God.

V: After having listened to the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation,

R: you have welcomed it not as a word of men, but, as it actually is, the word of God.

Second Reading. *Nm. 35 – 36*

The human activity.

A reading from the pastoral constitution “Gaudium et spes” of the Second Vatican Council on the Church in the contemporary world.

Human activity, to be sure, takes its significance from its relationship to man. Just as it proceeds from man, so it is ordered toward man. For when a man works he not only alters things and society, he develops himself as well. He learns much, he cultivates his resources, he goes outside of himself and beyond himself. Rightly understood this kind of growth is of greater value than any external riches that can be garnered. A man is more precious for what he is than for what he has. Similarly, all that men do to obtain greater justice, wider brotherhood, a more humane disposition of social relationships has greater worth than technical advances. For these advances can supply the material for human progress, but of themselves alone they can never actually bring it about.

Hence, the norm of human activity is this: that in accord with the divine plan and will, it harmonize with the genuine good of the human race, and that it allow men as individuals and as members of society to pursue their total vocation and fulfil it.

Now many of our contemporaries seem to fear that a closer bond between human activity and religion will work against the independence of men, of societies, or of the sciences.

If by the autonomy of earthly affairs we mean that created things and societies themselves enjoy their own laws and values which must be gradually deciphered, put to use, and regulated by men, then it is entirely right to demand that autonomy. Such is not merely required by modern man, but harmonizes also with the will of the Creator. For by the very circumstance of their having been created, all things are endowed with their own stability, truth, goodness, proper laws and order. Man must respect these as he isolates them by the appropriate methods of the individual sciences or arts. Therefore if methodical investigation within every branch of learning is carried out in a genuinely scientific manner and in accord with moral norms, it never truly conflicts with faith, for earthly matters and the concerns of faith derive from the same God. Indeed whoever labours to penetrate the secrets of reality with a humble and steady mind, even though he is unaware of the fact, is nevertheless being led by the hand of God, who holds all things in existence, and gives them their identity. Consequently, we cannot but deplore certain habits of mind, which are sometimes found too among Christians, which do not sufficiently attend to the rightful independence of science and which, from the arguments and controversies

they spark, lead many minds to conclude that faith and science are mutually opposed.

But if the expression, the independence of temporal affairs, is taken to mean that created things do not depend on God, and that man can use them without any reference to their Creator, anyone who acknowledges God will see how false such a meaning is. For without the Creator the creature would disappear. For their part, however, all believers of whatever religion always hear His revealing voice in the discourse of creatures. When God is forgotten, however, the creature itself grows unintelligible.

Responsorial. *Cfr. Deut. 2: 7; 8: 5*

R: God has blessed you in all the works of your hands, he has followed you in your journey through the desert; * the Lord your God has been with you: you have never lacked anything.

V: As a man educates his son, so also God instructs and guides you;

R: the Lord your God has been with you: you have never lacked anything.

Gospel. *Mk. 9: 2-13*

He was transfigured in front of them.

A reading from the Gospel of St. Mark.

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves; and he was transfigured before them, and his garments became glistening, intensely white, as no fuller on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses; and they were talking to Jesus.

And Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah." For he did not know what to say, for they were exceedingly afraid. And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him." And suddenly looking around they no longer saw any one with them but Jesus only.

And as they were coming down the mountain, he charged them to tell no one what they had seen, until the Son of man should have risen from the dead. So they kept the matter to themselves, questioning what the rising from the dead meant. And they asked him, "Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" And he said to them, "Elijah does come first to

restore all things; why then is it written of the Son of man, that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt? But I tell you that Eli'jah has come, and they did to him whatever they pleased, as it is written of him."