

 ART  TWO

 he  P RO P ER
of the  S E A S O N S





FUTUON
Twenty-fifth Sunday
In ORDINARY TIME

First Reading

Ezekiel 14.15-27

YHWH's message came to me in this way: "Son of man, with a sudden stroke I am taking away from you your eyes' delight; but do not grieve or weep or shed any tears. Have your groans be silent, and raise no mourning for the dead. Tie your turban round your head, put sandals on your feet, do not cover your beard, and do not eat the customary mourning bread."

That evening my wife died; and the next morning I did what I had been commanded to do. All the people then asked me, "Won't you tell us what everything you are doing means for us?" And so I spoke to the people that morning, and said to them, "This is how YHWH's message came to me: it said 'Tell the house of Israel, "This is what God YHWH says: I will now desecrate my sanctuary, your pride's fortress, your eyes' pleasure, your soul's desire. The sons and daughters you left behind will fall to sword-thrusts. Ezekiel will be a sign for you; you will do all he did when this happens, and in this way you will know that I am YHWH.'" You will do what I have done, not covering your beards or eating the customary bread; your turbans will stay on your heads, and your sandals on your feet. You will not mourn or weep, but you will rot away because of your sins, and you will groan to each other."

"As for you, son of man, what is a fact is that on the day I take from

4 Twenty-Fifth Week of Ordinary Time

them their support, their glorious joy, their eyes' delight, their soul's desire and their heart's pride (their sons and daughters) will be the day when the fugitives will come to you for you to hear it for yourself, and on that day your mouth will be opened and you will no longer be dumb. In this way, you will be a sign for them, and they will know that I am YHWH."

Ezekiel will be a sign for you; you will do what he has done, and you will know that I am your God the Master.

Tear your hearts apart, not your clothes, and return to your God the Master, and you will know that I am your God the Master.

Second Reading

A Sermon on Shepherds by St. Augustine

"You have neglected to strengthen the weak," says the Master. He is speaking to evil shepherds, false shepherds, shepherds who busy themselves with their own concerns and not those of the Prince. They enjoy the benefits of milk and wool, but they take no care at all of the sheep, and they make no effort to heal those who are ill. I think there is a difference between someone who is "infirm" in the sense of not strong, and one who is ill, though we sometimes say that the weak are "infirm" as if they were suffering from an illness.

My brothers and sisters, when I try to make that distinction, perhaps I could do it better and with greater precision—or perhaps someone with more experience and insight could do so. But when it comes to the words of Scripture, I say what I think, so that in the meantime you will not be deprived of all benefit. In the case of the weak sheep, what is to be feared is that when the temptation comes, it will break him. The sick person, however, is already ailing because of some illicit desire or other, and this is keeping him from entering God's path and submitting to the Prince's harness.

There are men who want to live a good life and have already decided to do so, but are not capable of bearing sufferings, even though they are ready to do good. Now it is a part of the Christian's strength not only to perform good deeds, but to endure hardship. Weak men are those who appear to be zealous in doing good deeds, but are unwilling or unable to endure the sufferings that threaten them. Lovers of the world, however, who are kept from good deeds by some evil desire, are lying

there sick and listless; and it is this sickness that deprives them of any strength to achieve any good deeds.

The paralyzed man was like that. When his bearers could not bring him in to the Master, they opened the roof and lowered him down to the Prince's feet. Perhaps you wish to do this in spirit: to open the roof and lower a paralyzed person down to the Master. All his limbs are lifeless; he is bereft of any good deed, burdened with his sins, and weak from the sickness brought on by his evil desires. Since all his limbs are helpless, and the paralysis is within him, you cannot come to the physician; but perhaps the physician is himself concealed inside him—because the true understanding of Scripture is hidden. And so reveal what is hidden, and in this way you will open the roof and lower the paralyzed man down to the Prince's feet.

As for those who fail to do this and those who are negligent, you have heard what was said to them: "You have failed to heal the sick; you have failed to bandage what was broken." We have already spoken of this. Man was broken by terrible temptations; but there is ready a comfort that will bandage what was broken: "God is faithful. He does not allow you to be tempted beyond your strength; he will provide a way out along with the temptation so that you will be able to survive it."

I became weak to the weak to win over the weak; I became everything to everyone so that I could save at least some of them.

I do all this for the Good News, to share in its rewards; I became everything to everyone so that I could save at least some of them.

Prayer

Dear Father, please guide us in the way you guide creation in accordance with your law of love, and may we love each other and come to perfection in the eternal life that is prepared for us. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.


 Monday
*First Reading**Ezekiel 34.1-6, 11-16, 23-31*

YHWH's message came to me in this way: "Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel—in these words prophesy to them, those shepherds: This is what is said by God YHWH:

"Those shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves are doomed! Should not shepherds instead be feeding sheep? You have drunk their milk, worn their wool, and slaughtered the ones you have fattened, but you have not sent the sheep out to pasture. You did not strengthen the weak or heal the sick or bandage the injured. You did not bring back the strays or look for the lost ones; you acted as harsh, brutal masters of slaves. And so they were scattered for lack of a shepherd, and became food for all the wild animals; my sheep were scattered and wandered over all the mountains and hills; my sheep were scattered over the whole earth, with no one to look after them or search for them.

"You see, this is what God YHWH says: I will look after them myself, and tend my sheep. I will tend my sheep in the way a shepherd tends his flock when he finds himself among his scattered sheep. I will rescue them from every place where they were scattered when it was cloudy and dark; I will lead them out from among the peoples and gather them from foreign countries; I will bring them back to their own country and send them to pasture on the mountains of Israel, in the land's ravines, and all its inhabited places. I will send them out to good pastures, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel; there they will lie down on good grazing ground, and they will be fed on rich pastures on the mountains of Israel.

"I will pasture my sheep myself; I will give them rest myself," says God YHWH. "I will search out the lost, I will bring back the strays, I will bandage the injured, and I will heal the sick (but I will destroy the sleek and strong), and shepherd them properly.

"I will designate one shepherd over them to feed them, my slave David; he will send them out to pasture, and be their shepherd. I, YHWH, will be their God, and my slave David will be the one in authority over them. I, YHWH, have spoken.

"I will contract a peace treaty with them, and rid the country of

ravenous beasts, so that they will be able to live safely in the desert and sleep in the forests. I will place them around my hill, and send rain at the proper seasons, rains that will be a blessing for them. The trees in the fields will bear their fruits, and the land its crops, and they will live in safety on their own land; and in this way, they will know that I am YHWH—when I break the straps of their harnesses and free them from the power of those who enslaved them. They will no longer be looted by the nations or eaten up by the wild animals on the earth; they will live in security, with no one to intimidate them.

“I will make peaceful fields ready for their planting; they will no longer be carried off by famine in the land, or put up with taunts from the nations. In this way, they will know that I, YHWH, am their God, and they are my people, the house of Israel,” says God YHWH. “You, my sheep, are the sheep in my pasture, and I am your God,” says God YHWH.

I will rescue my sheep from wherever they were scattered on the day of mist and darkness, and I will bring them back to their own land, and will feed them on rich pasturage.

I have come for them to have life, and have it to the full, and I will feed them on rich pasturage.

Second Reading

A Sermon on Shepherds, by St. Augustine

“You have not called back the strays, you have not gone looking for the lost sheep.” In one way or another, we go on living between the hands of robbers and the teeth of raging wolves, and in the light of these present dangers, we ask your prayers. And in addition, the sheep are insolent. The shepherd goes after the straying sheep, but because they have wandered away and are lost, they say that they are not ours. “What do you want with us? Why are you looking for us?” they ask, as if their straying and being lost were not the very reason for our wanting them and looking for them. “If I have wandered off,” one of them says, “and am lost, then why do you want me?” You have wandered off, that is why I want to call you back. You have been lost, and that is why I want to find you. “But I *want* to wander away,” he says; “I *want* to be lost.”

So you want to wander off and be lost? How much better for me not to want what I want. Certainly, I dare say, I am unwelcome; but I am

listening to the Emissary, who is saying, “Report the message; insist on it, when it is welcome, and when it is unwelcome.” Welcome to whom? Unwelcome to whom? Obviously, welcome to those who desire it, and unwelcome to those who do not. And no matter how unwelcome it is, I dare to say, “You want to wander off, you want to be lost; but *I* do not want this, because the one I am afraid of does not want this.” And even if I did want it, consider his reproach: “You have not called back the strays; you have not gone after the lost sheep.” Am I to be intimidated by you rather than him? “Remember, we must all present ourselves before the Prince’s tribunal.”

I will call back the strays, and I will go looking for the lost ones. Whether they want it or not, I will do it. And if the brambles in the forest tear at me when I am looking for them, I will force myself through all the thickets, and will pull down all the hedges. To the extent that the God I am afraid of grants me strength, I will look everywhere; I will call back the strays; I will search out those on the verge of being lost. If you do not want me to suffer, do not stray, and do not become lost. It is not enough for me to grieve over your wandering and loss; no, I am afraid that in neglecting you, I will also kill what is strong. Consider the passage that follows: “And you have destroyed what was strong.” If I were to neglect the straying and the lost sheep, the strong ones will also find it pleasant to stray and be lost.

Speak out when the time is right, and do not hide your wisdom, because speech makes wisdom known, and all a man has learned appears in his words.

Report the message; persevere in this task at the right time and the wrong time; correct, reprimand, call to obedience—but do everything with patience and healthy teaching; because speech makes wisdom known, and all a man has learned appears in his words.

Prayer

Dear Father, please guide us in the way you guide creation in accordance with your law of love, and may we love each other and come to perfection in the eternal life that is prepared for us. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages.

Amen.

uesday

First Reading

Ezekiel 36.16-36

This was how YHWH's message came to me: "Son of man, when the house of Israel lived in their land, they defiled it by their conduct and actions; their conduct in my sight was like the defilement of a menstruating woman. And that was why I poured my rage over them, because of the blood they poured on the ground and because they defiled it with idols. I scattered them among the nations and dispersed them over foreign countries; I sentenced them in accordance with how they had behaved and what they had done. But whenever they came among the nations, and wherever they came, they continued to profane my holy name, because it was said of them, 'These people belong to YHWH, and yet they had to leave their land.' So I have changed my mind because of my holy name, which the house of Israel profaned among the nations where they came.

"And so tell the house of Israel, 'This is what is said by God YHWH: "I am not acting for your sake, house of Israel, but for the sake of my holy name, which you profaned among the nations to which you came. I will prove the holiness of my great name which has been profaned among the nations, among whom you profaned it. In this way the nations will know that I am YHWH," says God YHWH, "when I prove my holiness through you in their sight.

"“You see, I will take you away out of the nations, and gather you from all the foreign countries, and bring you back to your own land. I will shower you with clean water to wash off all your impurities from you, and I will scrub you clean from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and place a new spirit within you by taking out of your bodies your hearts of stone and giving you hearts of flesh. I will put my Spirit inside you, and make you live by my regulations, and be careful to observe my rules. You will live in the land I gave your ancestors, and you will be my people and I will be your God.

"“I will save you from all your impurities; I will order the grain to be plentiful, and I will not send famine upon you. I will increase the fruit

10 Twenty-Fifth Week of Ordinary Time

on your trees and the crops in your fields; and in this way you will no longer bear the reproach of famine among the nations. Then you will remember your evil conduct, and recognize that your actions were not good; you will hate yourselves for your sins and your disgusting acts. It is not for your sake that I am acting,” says God YHWH; “let this be known to you. Be embarrassed and ashamed of your conduct, house of Israel.””

This is what God YHWH says: “When I purify you from all your crimes, I will repopulate the cities, and the ruins will be rebuilt; the abandoned land will be tilled, though it used to be a wasteland, exposed to the gaze of every passer-by. ‘This desolate land has become a garden of Eden,’ they will say. ‘The cities that were demolished are now repopulated and fortified.’ In this way, the neighboring nations that remain will know that I, YHWH, have rebuilt what was destroyed and replanted what was abandoned. I, YHWH, have promised this, and I will do it.”

I will take the hearts of stone from their bodies and give them hearts of flesh, so that they will be able to walk along my paths, and they will be my people and I will be their God.

I will give them a new heart and put a new Spirit inside them, so that they will be able to walk along my paths, and they will be my people and I will be their God.

Second Reading

A Sermon on Shepherds by St. Augustine

“They were scattered on every mountain and on every hill and over the entire face of the earth.” What is the meaning of the clause, “They were scattered over the entire face of the earth”? Some men constantly are searching for all the goods of the world, the goods that are so evident on the face of the earth. Yes, they love and value them. They do not want to die and have their lives buried in the Prince. “Over the entire face of the earth.” Men like this love earthly things; and in addition, this type of straying sheep are to be found over the entire face of the earth. They live in different places, but one mother—pride—has given birth to all of them, just as one mother—our Catholic Church—has given birth to all faithful Christians scattered over the whole world.

Small wonder that pride gives birth to division, and love to unity. But

our universal mother is herself a shepherd; she looks for the straying sheep everywhere, she strengthens the weak, heals the sick, and bandages the injured. They may not know each other, but she knows all of them because she reaches out to all her sheep.

In this way, she is like a vine that spreads everywhere in its growth. The straying sheep are like useless branches which, because of their sterility, are deservedly cut off, to prune the vine, not destroy it. When these branches were cut down, they were left lying there; but the vine grew and flourished, and it knew both the branches that were left on it, and those that had been cut off and were lying beside it.

She calls the stray sheep back, however, because the Emissary said about the broken branches, "God has the power to graft them in again." Call them sheep straying from the flock or branches cut off the vine, God is equally capable of calling back the sheep or of grafting the branches back on again, because he is equally the chief shepherd and the true farmer. "And they were scattered over the entire face of the earth, and there was no one to search for them, no one to call them back." That is to say, there was no one among those evil shepherds. "There was no one to search for them," that is, no one among human beings.

"Therefore, shepherds, listen to what the Master says: I am alive, says the Master God." Notice the beginning of this passage; it is as if God were taking an oath, giving testimony to his own life. "I am alive, says the Master God." Which shepherds are dead? Those who are looking for what is theirs and not what belongs to the Prince. But there will be shepherds who look for what is the Prince's and not theirs; and will they be found? Yes, there will be shepherds like this, and they will in fact be found; there is no shortage of them, and there will be no shortage in the future.

Through the Prince, we have full confidence in God, who has made us fitting servants of his new Treaty, one that is in the Spirit, not a written code.

We know that we cannot take credit for anything ourselves, because all our competence comes from God, who has made us fitting servants of his new Treaty, one that is in the Spirit, not a written code.

12 Twenty-Fifth Week of Ordinary Time

Prayer

Dear Father, please guide us in the way you guide creation in accordance with your law of love, and may we love each other and come to perfection in the eternal life that is prepared for us. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

ednesday

First Reading

Ezekiel 37. 1-14

YHWH's hand came upon me, and he led me out in YHWH's spirit, and set me down in the center of a plain, which was now filled with bones. He made me walk among them in every direction, so that I saw how many they were on the surface of the plain. They were so very dry!

He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?"

"God YHWH," in answered, "That is something you know."

Then he told me, "Prophesy over these bones, and tell them, 'Dry bones, listen to what YHWH is saying: This is what God YHWH says to these bones: "Now I will breathe breath, spirit, into you, for you to come to life. I will put sinews on you, make flesh grow over you, cover you with skin, and put breath and spirit into you so that you will come to life and know that I am YHWH."'"

I prophesied as I had been told, and even as I was prophesying, I heard a noise; it was a rattling as the bones came together, and bone joined bone. I saw the sinews and the flesh come on them; but there was no breath in them. Then YHWH told me, "Prophesy to the spirit; prophesy, son of man, and tell the spirit, 'This is what is said by God YHWH: "Come from the four winds, spirit, breathe, and breathe into these slaughtered men so that they will have life."'"

I prophesied as he told me, and breath came into them; they came alive and stood on their feet, a vast army. Then he told me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They have been saying, 'Our bones have dried up, our hope is lost, and we are cut off.' And so prophesy and say to them, 'This is what God YHWH says: "My people, I will open your graves and have you rise from them, and bring you back

to the land of Israel. Then you will know that I am YHWH, when I open your graves and have you rise from them, my people. I will put my Spirit in you so that you will live, and I will settle you upon your land; and in this way you will know that I am YHWH. I have promised this, and I will do it," says YHWH."

I will open your graves and lift you up out of them, and then you will know that I am the Master.

I am resurrection, and I am life; anyone who believes in me will be alive even if he is dead; and then you will know that I am the Master.

Second Reading

A Sermon on Shepherds by St. Augustine

"Shepherds, listen to what the Master says." But what are the shepherds to hear? "This is what is said by the Master God: You see, I am over the shepherds myself, and I will claim my sheep from their hands."

Listen and learn, sheep of God. God calls for an accounting of his sheep from the evil shepherds and asks about the death of his sheep at their hands—because in another passage, he speaks through the same prophet, "Son of man, I have designated you to be watchman for the house of Israel; you are to listen to what my mouth says, and you will point out the way to them in my name. When I tell a sinner that he will die, and you do not speak to warn the evil person away from his evil ways, he will die because of his immorality, but you will be held responsible for his death. If, however, you warn an evil man to turn away from his immorality, and he fails to do it, he will die because of his immorality, but you will have saved your soul."

Dear brothers and sisters, what does this mean? Do you see how dangerous it is to keep silent? Sinners die, and this is appropriate; they die in their immorality and sin, and their paying no attention to you is what has killed them. They could have found the Master, the living shepherd who says, "I am alive," but they paid no attention, and the one designated for this task, the watchman, did not warn them. And so evil people suffer death and their watchmen suffer the appropriate damnation.

But YHWH says, "If you tell an immoral man, 'You are sure to die,' and if he pays no attention to the sword which is the sanction I have threatened him with, that sword will catch up to him and kill him, and

14 Twenty-Fifth Week of ORDINARY TIME

he will die in his sin; but you will have saved your soul.” And so it is our task not to keep silent; and it is your task, even if we are silent, to listen to what the shepherd says from the Scriptures.

I have said that he will take the sheep from the bad shepherds and give them to shepherds who are good. Let us consider whether he does this. I see him taking the sheep from the bad shepherds, when he says, “Now I am over the shepherds myself, and I will claim my sheep from their hands; and I will turn away from them so that they will not be able to feed my sheep, and the shepherds are no longer the ones to send them out to pasture.” That is, when I say, “You are to feed my sheep,” they feed themselves and not my sheep; and so, “I will turn away from them so that they will not be able to feed my sheep.”

How does the Master turn away from them to keep them from feeding his sheep? “Do whatever they tell you, but do not follow what they do.” It is as if he said, “The words they say are mine, but their actions are their own. If you do not follow the example of the bad shepherds, they are not feeding you; and if you do what I say, I am the one who is feeding you.”

What kind of manager would be wise and faithful enough for the master to choose as the overseer for his household? That slave would be well advised to be found at work when his master returns.

Managers are expected to be trustworthy; that slave would be well advised to be found at work when his master returns.

Prayer

Dear Father, please guide us in the way you guide creation in accordance with your law of love, and may we love each other and come to perfection in the eternal life that is prepared for us. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

Thursday

*First Reading**Ezekiel 37.15-28*

This was how YHWH's message came to me: "Now, son of man, take one stick, and write on it, 'Judah and those Israelites associated with him.' Then take another stick and write on it, 'Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and the house of Israel associated with him.'

"Then join the two sticks together, so that they form one stick in your hand. When your countrymen ask you to tell them what you mean by all this, tell them, 'This is what God YHWH says: "I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in Ephraim's hand, along with the tribes of Israel associated with him, and I will join it to the stick of Judah, and make them a single stick; they will be one thing in my hand.'"

"The sticks you have written on are to be held up before them to see. Tell them, 'This is what God YHWH says: "I will take the Israelites from among the nations they have come to, and gather them from every direction to bring them back to their land. I will make them one nation on the land, in the mountains of Israel, and there will be one authority over all of them. Never again will they be two nations, and never again will they be divided into two kingdoms.

"They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, their disgusting practices, and all their disobedience. I will free them from all their sins of apostasy, and scrub them clean, so that they will be able to be my people and I can be their God.

"My slave David will be the authority above them, and there will be one shepherd for all of them; they will live by my regulations and carefully observe my rules. They will live on the land I gave to my slave Jacob, the land where their ancestors lived; they will live on it forever: they, their children, and their children's children, with my slave David as their ruler forever.

"I will make a treaty of peace with them—it will be an eternal treaty with them—and I will multiply them and put my holy place among them forever. My residence will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people; and in this way the nations will know that it is I, YHWH, who make Israel holy, when my holy place will be set up among them forever.

16 Twenty-Fifth Week of Ordinary Time

I will take the descendants of Israel and gather them from everywhere; I will make them one nation, and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

A good shepherd gives up his life for his sheep; and there will be one flock and one shepherd.

Second Reading

A Sermon on Shepherds by St. Augustine

“I will lead them out from the Gentiles, and I will gather them from foreign countries; I will bring them to their own lands, and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel.” It was God who raised up the mountains of Israel—that is to say, the authors of the divine Scriptures. Take your food there, so that you will eat securely. Whatever you hear from that source, you should enjoy tasting; reject what is foreign to it. Listen to the voice of the shepherd, to keep you from wandering around in the mist. Gather at the mountains of holy Scripture; there is where the things that will give pleasure to your hearts are, and there you will find nothing poisonous, nothing that is against you; and there the pastures are the most luxuriant. There you will find healthy sheep, and you will feed safely on the mountain of Israel.

“And I will feed them in streams and in every inhabited place on the land.” The streams of the message of the Good News have issued from the mountains we have shown you, because “their voice has gone out into the whole world,” and every habitable place has become pleasant and fertile for the grazing sheep.

“I will feed them on good pastures and on the high mountains of Israel; and there is where their grazing ground will be.” That is, this is the place where they will rest, where they will say that they are happy, and where they will say, “It is true; it is evident; we were not cheated.” They will find rest in the glory of God, when they find rest in those grazing grounds; “and they will sleep,” or, find rest, “and they will rest in good pastures.”

“And they will be fed in rich pastures on the mountains of Israel.” I have already spoken of the mountains of Israel, the good mountains to which we raise our eyes and from which will come our help. But our help is from the Master, who made heaven and earth. And so we should not place our hope in the good mountains themselves, but we should rely on his word, when he says, “I will feed” my sheep “on the mountains of

Israel.” We should not merely remain on the mountains themselves, because he immediately added, “I will feed my sheep.” And so raise your eyes to the mountains, which is where your help comes from, but take note that he says, “I will do the feeding,” because your help is “from the Master, who made heaven and earth.”

He concludes by saying, “And I will feed them with discernment.” Observe that he is the only one to feed his sheep in this way, in feeding them with discernment; because what man can make a proper judgment of another? Our whole daily life is filled with rash judgments; the one we despaired of is suddenly converted and becomes very good; the one we expected a great deal from suddenly fails and becomes very bad. Neither our fear nor our hope is certain.

Any man himself even barely knows what he is today; still, he does have some knowledge of what he is today. But he does not know what he will be tomorrow; and so the Master, who assigns to each person what he deserves, feeds his sheep with discernment, giving some things to one group, and other things to another, and giving to each what is right for it. Because he knows what he is doing; he feeds with discernment those whom he, since he was judged himself, redeemed; and that is why he himself is feeding his sheep with discernment.

I am a good shepherd; I know my sheep and those that are mine know me.

I will tend my sheep and search them out; I will bring them out from among the peoples and lead them to pasture; I know my sheep and those that are mine know me.

Prayer

Dear Father, please guide us in the way you guide creation in accordance with your law of love, and may we love each other and come to perfection in the eternal life that is prepared for us. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

*First Reading**Ezekiel 40.1-4, 43.1-12, 44.6-9*

On the tenth of the month beginning the twenty-fifth year of our exile, fourteen years after the city was taken, on that very day the hand of YHWH came upon me and brought me in divine visions to the land of Israel, where he set me on top of a very high mountain. On it, there seemed to be a city being built before me.

When he had brought me there, all at once I saw a man whose appearance was like bronze; he was standing in the gate, holding a linen cord and a measuring-rod. The man told me, "Son of man, look carefully and listen closely, and pay strict attention to all I will show you, because you have been brought here for me to show it to you. Tell the house of Israel all that you see."

Then he led me to the gate that faces east, and there I saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. I heard a sound like the roaring of a great deal of water, and the earth shone with his glory. The vision was like the one I saw when he came to destroy the city, and like the one I saw by the river Chebar. I fell on my face as the glory of God entered the temple by way of the eastern gate; but spirit lifted me up and brought me to the inner court; and I saw that the temple was filled with YHWH's glory.

Then I heard someone speaking to me from the temple, while the man stood beside me. The voice told me, "Son of man, this is where my throne will be; this is where I will set the soles of my feet; here is where I will live among the Israelites forever. Never again will they and their kings profane my holy name with their prostitutions and the corpses of their kings, their high places. When they placed their threshold against my threshold and their doorpost next to mine, so that only a wall was between us, they profaned my holy name by their disgusting actions; and that is why I burned them up in my anger. From now on they will put far from me their prostitution and the corpses of their kings, and I will live among them forever.

"As for you, son of man, describe the temple to the house of Israel, so that they will be ashamed of their sins, both its measurements and its design; and if they are ashamed of all that they have done, make known

to them the form and design of the temple: its exits and entrances, all its regulations and laws; write these down for them to see, so that they will observe carefully all its laws and regulations. This is the law of the temple: its whole surrounding area on the mountain-top will be extremely sacred.

“Say to that rebellious house, the house of Israel: ‘This is what God YHWH says: “I have had enough of all these disgusting actions of yours, house of Israel. You have admitted foreigners, uncircumcised both in their hearts and bodies, to my sanctuary to profane it when you offered me food, fat, and blood; and in this way you have broken my Treaty with your disgusting behavior. Instead of caring for the service of my temple, you have designated people like this to serve me in the sanctuary in place of you.” This is what God YHWH says: “No foreigners, uncircumcised in heart and body, are ever to enter my sanctuary; none of the foreigners living among the Israelites!””

The Master’s glory entered the temple by the eastern gate, and the house of God was filled with his splendor.

His parents took the child Jesus into the Temple, and the house of God was filled with his splendor.

Second Reading

A Sermon on Shepherds by St. Augustine

The Prince is your shepherd and judge; he judges between his sheep and other sheep. “My sheep,” he says, “listen to my voice and follow me.”

In this statement, I find that all good shepherds are one and the same in the one shepherd. It is not that there is a dearth of good shepherds; they are there in the one shepherd. When we speak of “many,” we are referring to those who are separated from each other; here, only one is spoken of, because in this passage, unity is advocated. The reason why shepherds, plural, are not mentioned here and only one shepherd is is not because the Master has not been able to find anyone to whom to entrust his sheep; he entrusted the sheep to Peter because he had found Peter. In fact, in the case of Peter, he also advocated the unity of the flock; there were many Emissaries, and yet he said only to one, “Feed my sheep.” Do not imagine that there will be no more good shepherds, or that we will not be able to find enough of them, or that the Master’s

20 Twenty-Fifth Week of ORDINARY TIME

mercy will not produce and install them.

If there are good sheep, there certainly are good shepherds; good sheep give rise to good shepherds. But all good shepherds are one and the same in the one good shepherd; they form a unity. If they simply feed the sheep, the Prince is feeding the sheep; the friends of the bridegroom do not speak with their own voice; they find great pleasure in listening to the bridegroom's voice. The Prince is himself the shepherd when they act as shepherds. "I feed them," he says, because his voice is in their voice, and his love is in their love.

When he entrusted his sheep to Peter as one person to another, the Prince chose to make Peter one and the same as himself. He wanted to entrust him with the sheep in such a way that he would be the head himself and Peter would represent the body: that is, the Church. As bridegroom and bride, the Prince and the Church were to be two in one flesh.

And therefore, what does he say before he entrusts the sheep to Peter as to someone who is not separate from himself? "Peter, are you fond of me?" He answered, 'I love you.' And again, 'Are you fond of me?' He answered, 'I love you.' And a third time, 'Do you love me?' He answered, 'I love you.'" He receives an assurance of love in order to institute unity. The Prince is the one shepherd who is one and the same as the other shepherds, and in whom they are themselves one and the same.

Shepherds, plural, are not mentioned, but they are not ignored. Shepherds have reason for pride, but "if anyone wants to be proud of something, he should be proud in the Master." This means that the Prince should be the shepherd, that they should be shepherds for the Prince, not shepherds for themselves, apart from the Prince. When the prophet said, "I will feed my sheep," it was not because he did not have enough shepherds, as though he were foretelling hard times to come and saying, "I have no one to entrust my sheep to." At a time when Peter himself and the Emissaries also were alive in the body, the Prince, the one in whom alone all of them are one thing, said this: "I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold; I must bring them in as well, so that there will be one flock and one shepherd."

All shepherds should therefore be one and the same in the good shepherd. All of them should speak with the one voice of the one

shepherd, so that the sheep will listen and follow their shepherd: not this or that shepherd, the one shepherd. All of them should speak with one voice in the Prince, not different voices. “My brothers and sisters, I beg all of you, please say the same thing, and have no dissensions among you.” The sheep should hear this voice, a voice purified from all schism and freed from all heresy, and so follow their shepherd, who says, “My sheep listen to my voice and follow me.”

Do not abandon your flock, Master, because you are our good shepherd; you never sleep and always watch over us.

With your loving mercy, Master, please protect us from our deceitful enemy, the devil, because you are our good shepherd; you never sleep and always watch over us.

Prayer

Dear Father, please guide us in the way you guide creation in accordance with your law of love, and may we love each other and come to perfection in the eternal life that is prepared for us. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

Ezekiel 47.1-12

The angel brought me back to the entrance of the temple, and I saw water flowing out from beneath the threshold of the temple toward the east, because the facade of the temple was toward the east; the water flowed down from the southern side of the temple, south of the altar. He led me outside by the north gate, and around to the outer gate facing east, where I saw water trickling from the southern side.

Then, when he had walked off to the east with a measuring cord in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits and had me wade through the water, which was ankle-deep. He measured off another thousand and once more made me wade through the water, which was now knee-deep.

22 Twenty-Fifth Week of Ordinary Time

Again he measured off a thousand cubits and had me wade; the water was up to my waist. Once more he measured off a thousand cubits, but there was now a river through which I could not wade; the water had risen so high it had become a river that could not be crossed except by swimming. He asked me, "Have you seen this, son of man?" Then he brought me to the bank of the river, where he had me sit.

Along the bank of the river, I saw very many trees on both sides. He said to me, "This water flows into the eastern district down upon the Arabah, and empties into the sea, whose salt water it makes fresh. Wherever the river flows, every sort of animal that can multiply will live, and there will be abundant fish, because wherever this water comes, the sea will become fresh. Fishermen will be standing along it from En-ge-di to En-eglaim, spreading their nets there. Its kind of fish will be like those in the Great Ocean, very numerous; only its marshes and swamps will not be made fresh and will be left for salt.

"Fruit trees of every kind will grow along the banks of the river; their leaves will not wither and they will not stop producing fruit. Every month, they will produce fresh fruit, because they will be watered by the flow from the sanctuary; their fruit will serve for food, and their leaves for medicine."

I saw water flowing eastward from beneath the threshold of the temple, and wherever this water flows, everything will live.

The water I give you will become a spring of water inside you gushing up to eternal life, and wherever this water flows, everything will live.

Second Reading

A Discourse on the Psalms by St. Hilary

"God's river is brimming with water. You have provided their food, because this is your way of preparing them." There can be no doubt about the river referred to, because the prophet says, "There is a river whose tributaries make the city of God glad." and in the Good News, the Master himself says, "Streams of living water gushing up to eternal life will flow from the heart of anyone who drinks the water I will give him. He was speaking of the Holy Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive." The river of God is brimming with water; that is to say, we are inundated by the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and from that

spring of life, the river of God pours into us in full flood.

We also have food prepared for us. And who is this food? It is the one in whom we are made ready for life with God, because by receiving his holy body, we receive a place in the unity of his holy body. This is what is meant by the words of the psalm, "You have provided their food, because this is your way of preparing them." That is, in addition to refreshing us now, that food also prepares us for the life to come.

Those of us who have been reborn through the sacrament of the Bath experience intense joy when we feel within us the first stirrings of the Holy Spirit. We begin to have an insight into the mysteries of faith, we are able to prophesy and to speak with wisdom. We become steadfast in hope, and receive the gift of healing; demons are made subject to our authority. These gifts enter us like a gentle rain, and once they have done so, little by little, they produce an abundance of fruit.

They will feast on the abundance of your house, Master, and you will give them drink from the river of your pleasure.

We will be filled with the good things of your house, and you will give them drink from the river of your pleasure.

Prayer

Dear Father, please guide us in the way you guide creation in accordance with your law of love, and may we love each other and come to perfection in the eternal life that is prepared for us. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

Twenty-Sixth Sunday In Ordinary Time

First Reading

Phil. 1.1-11

Paul and Timothy, slaves of Jesus the Prince, to all the sacred people in Jesus the Prince who are in Philippi, and to their overseers and officials:

Blessings and peace to you from our Father and the Master Prince Jesus.

I thank God for all my memories of you, and whenever I ask him for anything for all of you, I ask him gladly, because of the way you have kept helping me out in my reporting the good news right from the beginning until now; and I am convinced of one thing: that the one who began his good work in you will complete it by Prince Jesus' day.

And it is certainly right for me to feel this way about all of you, since you kept me in your hearts when I went to prison; and when I was taken to court to defend and support the report of the good news, you all had your share in the gift I had. God knows how fond I am of you, with the heart of Prince Jesus himself.

And this is what I pray for: for your love to grow stronger and stronger until it overflows in insight and every sort of perception, so that you will be able to discern what is good for you; and this will make you sincere and faultless on the Prince's day, with a full harvest of virtue by the work of Prince Jesus for the praise and glory of God.

May your love grow always deeper in knowledge and every sort of discernment, so that, as you always perceive what is best, you will act without blame and with a clear conscience.

I am sure that the one who began this good work in you will

continue to improve it until Prince Jesus's day, so that, as you always perceive what is best, you will act without blame and with a clear conscience.

Second Reading

A Letter to the Philippians by St. Polycarp

Polycarp and his fellow elders to the pilgrim community of God in Philippi: Abundant peace and mercy from the Omnipotent God and our Savior Prince Jesus.

I am extremely happy with you in the Master Prince Jesus, because you have taken on the model of true love and have correctly helped on their way those who were imprisoned. Their chains are adornments to the faithful; they are the rich laurel crown of victory of the one chosen by our Master and God. I am also glad that your deep-rooted faith, which was spoken of in the past, still remains in you and continues to produce a harvest in the life-giving power of our Master Prince Jesus. He did not refuse to go down to death for our sins, and "God brought him back to life after destroying the pains of the land of the dead. You believe in the Prince without seeing him, with a glorious joy no words can express." This is the joy which many people wish to share, "since they know that it is by grace you are saved, and not by your actions," because this is what God has willed through Prince Jesus.

"So make yourselves ready for the struggle; be the Master's slaves in fear" and truth. Give up empty talk and popular errors; "your faith should be in the one who brought our Master Prince Jesus back from death and gave him a share in his own glory" and a throne beside him. Everything in heaven and on earth was made subject to him; everything obeys him, and he will come as judge of the living and the dead. Everyone who refuses to believe in him must answer to God for the blood of his Son.

The one who raised him from death will bring us back to life also if we do his will and keep his commandments, loving what he loved, and refraining from all wrongdoing, fraud, greed, malice, and slander. We must forego lying testimony, "and not pay back harm with harm or curses with curses," or blows with blows or defamations with defamation. Always remember the Master's words, when he taught, "Do not evaluate others and you will not be evaluated; forgive, and you will be forgiven; be merciful and you will find mercy; the amount you measure

26 Twenty-Sixth Week of Ordinary Time

out to others will be the amount measured out to you. It is a blessing to be poor and to suffer persecution, because those who experience this belong to God's Kingdom."

God has saved us and called us to a life of holiness, not because of anything we had done, but in accordance with his own design and by his own grace; a grace which was given us in Jesus the Prince before time began.

Give glory to your own name, Master, not to us—not to us, because of your kindness and truth; a grace which was given to us in Jesus the Prince before time began.

Prayer

Dear Father, since you show your omnipotent power in your mercy and forgiveness, please continue to fill us with your gifts of love, and help us hurry toward the eternal life you promise and come to share in the joys of your Kingdom. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

Phil. 1.12-26

And I want you to realize, brothers and sisters, that what happened to me has helped spread the report of the good news rather than anything else; so that the whole headquarters is now aware of my imprisonment for the Prince, and so are all the rest of the people; and most of the brothers and sisters in the Master have taken confidence from my imprisonment to say what needs to be said with conviction and courage.

Of course, some of the people deliver the Prince's proclamation out of jealousy and competitiveness, and only some are doing it out of good will. The ones doing it out of love are aware that I am in prison because I have defended the Report; the ones who are in competition with me aren't sincere in reporting about the Prince, and are trying to cause trouble for me here in prison. But what difference does it make? No

matter how it is being done, honestly or dishonestly, the news about the Prince is being told, and that makes me happy.

Not only that, but I'll keep being happy, because I know that this will lead to my release, because of your prayers and the help that the Spirit of Prince Jesus provides to bolster my hope's expectation that I will not disgrace myself in any way, and that the Prince's greatness will become totally clear in my body now, as it always has been, whether through my life or my death. For me, life is the Prince, and death is a blessing.

Of course, if I continue my material life, this can be useful for getting things done; and so I don't know what I would rather have. I am torn between the two; what I would like is to set sail and be with the Prince, which would be much better for me; but staying in my body might be more necessary for you. And in fact I have a conviction that I will stay alive and remain with all of you, for the development and happiness of your belief, so that your pride in me in Jesus the Prince will be all the greater because of my appearance among you again.

I know that I will never be embarrassed, because my hopes and expectations have never been disappointed. I have complete trust that now, as always, the Prince will be glorified in me whether I live or die.

That is, for me, life is the Prince, and death is a blessing; the Prince will be glorified in me whether I live or die.

Second Reading

A Letter to the Philippians by St. Polycarp

I am not writing to you about what virtue means out of presumption, my brothers and sisters, but because you asked me to—because neither I nor anyone like me can equal the wisdom of blessed, glorious Paul. When he was in your city, he fully and courageously taught the men of that time the message that was the truth; and when he was not there, he wrote you letters. By carefully studying these letters, you can strengthen yourselves in the faith that has been given to you, a faith which is “the mother of all of us,” followed by hope, and preceded by love: love of God, love of the Prince, and love of our neighbor. Whoever lives within this framework has fulfilled the commandment of virtue; because anyone who has love is far from sin.

“Now the source of all evil is the desire to have things.” Recalling

that “we brought nothing into this world and can take nothing out of it,” we should put on the armor of virtue. We must begin by teaching ourselves how to walk in the path of the Master’s commandment. Then you should teach your wives to walk in the faith that has been handed down to them, in love and chastity. They must love their husbands with complete fidelity, but they are to treasure everyone else equally and with self-control; they must rear their children in the training that comes from God. We must teach widows to be discreet in everything that deals with the Master’s faith; they must pray constantly for everyone, and keep away from all calumny, gossip, lying testimony, greed, and, in a word, every sort of evil. They must bear in mind that they are God’s sacrificial altar; he sees everything clearly, and nothing escapes his vigilance, whether it is calculation, thought, or some secret desire of the heart.

We know that “no one makes a fool of God.” Let us conduct ourselves in a way that is appropriate to his commands and his purposes. Deacons, in the same way, must be blameless in the sight of his goodness, since they are servants of God and the Prince, not men. They must avoid calumny, hypocritical talk, and greed. They must control all their desires and be merciful and industrious, and conduct themselves in accordance with the truth of the Master who became the servant of all of us. If we please him in this life, we will receive the life to come; because he has promised us that he will bring us back from the dead, and that, if we lead lives worthy of him, we will be kings along with him. This is what our faith tells us.

There are many things that are true, honorable, virtuous and deserving love; and if there is anything virtuous, anything that deserves admiration, think of these things above everything else.

Put into practice what you have learned and been taught, and then the God of peace will be with you; and if there is anything virtuous, anything that deserves admiration, think of these things above everything else.

Prayer

Dear Father, since you show your omnipotent power in your mercy and forgiveness, please continue to fill us with your gifts of love, and help us hurry toward the eternal life you promise and come to share in the joys

of your Kingdom. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

Phil. 1.27-2.11

But meanwhile, behave the way the good news of the Prince deserves, so that whether I come and see you or hear about you from a distance, I will know that you are staying firm in one spirit, and with one will joining the struggle for the belief in the good news, without cowering before any of your opponents. That will be their sign that they are doomed and you are rescued, and that this is done by God; because you have been given the gift from the Prince not only to believe in him, but suffer for him too; you have the same struggle you saw that I had and hear that I am now having.

In any case, if there is any support in the Prince, if there is encouragement from your love, if there is a sharing in the Spirit, or if you have any affection and tenderness, make my happiness complete by agreeing together, having the same love, the same feelings, and the same thoughts; don't let there be bickering or conceit, and in your humility, think of others as more important than yourselves. Be concerned about others' interests, not your own.

Your attitude is to be the one that was in Prince Jesus, who when he possessed God's form did not consider being equal to God something he had to keep hold of; he emptied himself and took the form of a slave, and turned himself into what was the same as a human being; and once he found himself in human shape, he lowered himself so far as to submit obediently to death, and death on a cross.

That is why God elevated him above everyone else and gave him the name that is greater than every other name, so that at the name "Jesus" "every knee" in heaven, on earth, and under the earth "is to bend," and "everyone's tongue is to acknowledge" for "God's" glory that he is the slave of Prince Jesus.

30 Twenty-Sixth Week of Ordinary Time

The Prince carried our sins on the cross so that we could die to sin and live a life of holiness; through his death, he broke the power of the devil, who is the ruler of death.

Our faith rests on Jesus, who endured the cross for the sake of the joy that lay before him; through his death, he broke the power of the devil, who is the ruler of death.

Second Reading *A Letter to the Philippians by St. Polycarp*

Elders should be sympathetic and merciful to everyone, bring back those who have wandered, and visit the sick; they are not to neglect widows and orphans or the poor, “and always provide for what is good in the sight of God and men.” They should completely avoid anger, human respect, and prejudice, and greed should be something absolutely foreign to them. Also, they are not to be hasty in believing something said against someone else, or too severe in evaluating others, since they know that we are all debtors through our sins.

And so if we pray for the Master to forgive us, we must forgive in our turn, because we live under the eye of our Master and God, and “we are all to stand before God’s bench, for each of us to give an account of himself”; so we should serve God with fear and awe.

The Master’s command is also the command of the Emissaries who reported the Good News to us, to say nothing of the prophets who foretold the Master’s coming. Our observance of what is good should be meticulous, and avoid anything that might be an obstacle to someone else; we should keep away from false brothers and those who take on the Master’s name hypocritically and lead people who are not careful into error.

“That is, anyone who does not acknowledge that Jesus has come in the flesh is the counter-Prince.” And anyone who refuses to admit the evidence of the cross belongs to the devil. Those who pervert the Master’s words to suit their own desires and deny that there is a return to life or a judgment are the firstborn of Satan; so we should abandon the stupidity of the mass of people and their false teaching and return to the teaching that was handed down to us from the beginning. We must be alert in prayers, and constant in fasting; and in our prayers, we should beg God, who sees everything, “not to lead us into trouble.” As the Master said, “the spirit is willing; it is the matter that is weak.”

So let us keep on in the pledge of our virtue and in our hope: that is, in Jesus the Prince. “In his mouth there was found no hint of guilt; he committed no sin and yet carried our sins on his own body on the tree.” Or in other words, he endured everything for us to enable us to live in him; and so let us imitate his perseverance; if we have to suffer because of his name, let us give him that glory—because this is the personal example he has given us, and this is the object of our faith.

We should be concerned with living honest lives, not only in the sight of God but in the sight of every man; we should never be an obstacle to anyone, so that our service will not receive blame.

I trust in God and work hard to keep a clear conscience before God and men so that our service will not receive blame.

Prayer

Dear Father, please guide us in the way you guide creation in accordance with your law of love, and may we love each other and come to perfection in the eternal life that is prepared for us. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

Wednesday

First Reading

Phil. 2.12-30

So, my friends, submit obediently, as you always do, not just when I am with you, but even more now that I am away; and work for your own rescue with fear and diffidence—because it is God who is active inside you, and who makes the choices and performs the acts that he sees fit.

Do everything without complaining and objecting, so you will become faultless and sincere, and be blameless children of God in an age that is warped and perverted, where you shine like stars in the night sky—since what you have to say is life. And this will be what I have to show on the Prince’s day that I haven’t been running around in circles or wasting my time.

And if I am to be put on the altar and slaughtered in the holy service of your faith, I am glad to do it, and I am happy with your happiness—and in the same way you be happy yourselves and happy with my happiness.

I hope in Master Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so I can be cheered up by hearing about you. I don't have anyone else around me that feels the way I feel and cares at all about what is happening with you; everyone is busy with his own interests, not those of Prince Jesus. But you know Timothy's character, and that he has been in the service of the Report with me as if he were my son. Anyway, I hope to send him as soon as I find out what is going to happen to me; and I am convinced in the Master that I will be coming myself soon.

I also think I have to send back to you brother Epaphroditus, my co-worker and comrade-in-arms, the one you sent with me to see to my needs. He has been quite homesick, and was depressed that you heard that he was ill. He was in fact seriously ill, and near death; but God was kind to him—and not just to him, but to me too, so that I wouldn't have suffering piled on top of suffering. Anyway, I am very glad to send him back, so that you can see him and be happy, and I will be relieved of that much more pain.

In any case, welcome him back in the Master with wholehearted joy; people like him deserve your respect, because he came near death in working for the Prince, and risked his life to fulfill the service for me that you could not give.

Work all the harder to confirm God's choice and calling of you, and then you will generously be granted entrance into the Kingdom of our Master and Savior Prince Jesus.

Live as children of light and take no part in the empty deeds of darkness, and then you will generously be granted entrance into the Kingdom of our Master and Savior Prince Jesus.

Second Reading

A Letter to the Philippians by St. Polycarp

I ask you all to please respond to the call to virtue and to practice unlimited patience. Your own eyes have seen this not only in blessed Ignatius, Zosimus, and Rufus, but in others from among you as well, to say nothing of Paul and the other Emissaries. Rest assured that all these

men “did not run their race for nothing.” No, they ran it in faith and virtue, and are now with the Master in the place they have earned, just as they were once with him in suffering. “Their love was not for this present world”; it was for the one who died for our sakes and for us was brought back to life by God.

Be firm, then, and follow the Master’s example, and be strong and unshaken in your faith, loving the community as much as you love each other. Since you are united in the truth, show the Master’s own gentleness in your dealings with each other, and look down on no one. If you can do good, do not put it off, because “giving to charity frees a person from death.” Be subject to each other, and “make sure that your conduct among the pagans is beyond reproach.” In this way, you will be praised for “the good you have done,” and the Master will not be blasphemed because of you. “But the person because of whom the Master’s name is blasphemed is doomed.” And so teach everyone to live soberly, in the same way that you live yourselves.

I was very sorry to hear about Valens, who at one time was an elder among you; he does not understand the position to which he was called. So I urge all of you to be chaste and honest, to avoid greed and keep away from every form of evil. If a man cannot control himself in these ways, how can he teach someone else to do so? If he does not avoid greed, he will be defiled by idolatrous practices and be thought of as one of the pagans who know nothing of the Master’s judgment. Or, as Paul teaches us, “Do we not know that the sacred people will judge the world?”

Of course, I have never heard of anything like this among you, who are the people for whom blessed Paul worked so hard, and whom he commends at the beginning of his letter; because he bragged about you in all the communities which at the time were the only ones who had come to know God—we had not yet come to that knowledge ourselves.

My brothers and sisters, I am deeply sorry for Valens and his wife; may the Master bestow on them a true change of heart. As for you yourselves, be self-controlled in this respect. “Do not look on people like this as enemies,” but invite them back as frail members who have gone astray, so that the entire body of which you are a part will be saved. In doing this, you are contributing to your own spiritual development.

34 Twenty-Sixth Week of Ordinary Time

Work out your rescue in fear and trembling, because it is God who is working in you so that you both choose and act consistently with his own good purpose.

The Master says, “Without me you can do nothing,” because it is God who is working in you so that you both choose and act consistently with his own good purpose.

Prayer

Dear Father, since you show your omnipotent power in your mercy and forgiveness, please continue to fill us with your gifts of love, and help us hurry toward the eternal life you promise and come to share in the joys of your Kingdom. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

hursday

First Reading

Phil.3.1-16

Finally, my brothers and sisters, be happy in the Master.

—I am now going to write something I wrote before, which may keep you from harm, and is no bother for me to do.

Keep your eyes open for the dogs: watch out for the mutilators; be careful not to get yourselves castrated. We are the ones who are “circumcision,” remember, because we worship God spiritually, and our claim is in Prince Jesus; we don't put our confidence in some material thing.

Though if it comes to that, I can be materially confident. If someone else comes along and shows material credentials, I can show more of them; I was circumcised eight days after I was born, I am an Israelite, I belong to the tribe of Benjamin, I am a Hebrew whose ancestors were all Hebrews, a pharisee in my legal position, who was so fervent that I even oppressed the community; and in obedience to the law I was faultless.

But all of this that used to be for my benefit I regard as loss because of the Prince. More than that; I consider everything whatsoever as loss

in comparison with the knowledge of Jesus the Prince, my Master, for whom I have in fact lost everything; and as far as I am concerned, it is all shit, so long as the Prince is my compensation, and I find myself in him—so that I have no virtue of my own, or virtue that comes from the law; any virtue of mine comes from belief in the Prince. This is virtue that comes from God and is given to belief; and it is the virtue of knowing him and the power of his bringing the Prince back to life, and it is sharing in his sufferings and taking on the form of his death with him in the hope that I can arrive at his resurrection from death.

It isn't that I have got there yet, or that I have reached the end yet; but I am aiming at it in the hope of getting a good hold on what the Prince took hold of me for. No, brothers and sisters, I don't think that I have got hold of it myself; but I do say this one thing: I don't look behind, and I keep reaching forward, and I am running toward the goal for the prize which is God's call from above in Prince Jesus.

Those of us who are mature ought to be thinking this way; if any of you have a different idea about things, God will show you that this is what is right—but of course we have to act consistently with the level we have reached.

I have considered everything worthless so that I could gain the Prince; I want to know the Prince and the power of his return to life, and to be united with him in his sufferings.

We believe that if we die with the Prince, we will also live with him; I want to know the Prince and the power of his return to life, and to be united with him in his sufferings.

Second Reading

A Letter to the Philippians by St. Polycarp

I am sure that you are well-grounded in the Scriptures and that nothing of their message escapes you; I, on the other hand, have not been so fortunate. As these same Scriptures put it, "Be angry but do not sin," and "Do not let the sun set on your anger." A man is well advised to bear this in mind, as I am sure you do.

May God the Father of our Master Prince Jesus and the eternal high priest himself build up the faith and the truth and great gentleness in you; may you never know anger, and be patient, forbearing, persevering, and chaste. May he bestow on you a place among the saints, and may he

36 Twenty-Sixth Week of Ordinary Time

give the same to us along with you, as well as to everyone on earth who puts his faith in our Master Prince Jesus and in his “Father, who has brought him back from the dead.”

Please keep all the sacred people in your prayers, and also pray for our rulers and leaders, and for everyone in power, even for those who persecute and hate you, and for those who are enemies of the cross. In this way, your good deeds will be seen by everyone, and you will become fully developed in him.

Both you and Ignatius have written me to ask whether anyone going to Syria will deliver your letter as well as ours. If the opportunity offers itself, I will do it; if I cannot, I will send a representative.

As you asked, we have returned to you the letters Ignatius sent us, along with as many other letters as we had; they are being enclosed with this letter. You will derive great benefit from them, because they are full of faith and perseverance, and are extremely edifying in everything that refers to our Master. Please send us any information you have about Ignatius and his companions.

I am sending this letter to you by Crescens, whom I recommended to you when I was present, and do so again. He has lived without blame among us, as I am sure he will among you; when his sister comes to you, she will also come with our recommendation.

May you find protection in the Master Prince Jesus, and may his grace be with everyone who is connected with you. Amen.

May the God of peace give you everything good, so that you will be able to do his will; may he achieve in you all that is pleasing to him through Prince Jesus.

May he give all of you a heart to worship him and do his will; may he achieve in you all that is pleasing to him through Prince Jesus.

Prayer

Dear Father, since you show your omnipotent power in your mercy and forgiveness, please continue to fill us with your gifts of love, and help us hurry toward the eternal life you promise and come to share in the joys of your Kingdom. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

*First Reading**Phil. 3.17-4.9*

But all of you should follow my example, brothers and sisters, and pay attention to the way the people who take us as a model behave. There are many people, as I have told you so often, whose behavior, I am sorry to say, makes them enemies of the Prince's cross. They are doomed; their God is their stomach, their pride is in their shame; they are the ones whose attention is on the earth.

Of course, our citizenship is in heaven, which is where we expect our rescuer, Master Jesus the Prince, to come from; and he will transform this shabby body of ours and make it the same form as his glorious one, by an exercise of the power by which he makes everything do just what he wishes.

And so, my brothers and sisters, my friends I love so much, my joy and my winner's wreath, stand up tall in the Master, my friends.

I would like to ask Euodia and Syntyche to patch up their differences in the Master; and I would like you too, my noble companion, to help them, since they shared my struggle for the Report along with Clement and the rest of my coworkers, whose names are in the Book of Life. Always be happy in the Master; I repeat, be happy. Your tolerance should be something anyone can recognize.

The Master is near. Don't let anything worry you; let God know your requests with thanks in all your worship and prayers; and God's peace, which is beyond all thought, will watch over your hearts and minds in Jesus the Prince.

Finally, brothers and sisters, have your thoughts be about what is true, what is noble, what is virtuous, what is pure, what is charitable, what is decent, and any good and praiseworthy act; and do whatever you learned, accepted, heard, and saw from me; and the God of peace will be with you.

I beg you in the Master's name, please stop living as the pagans do, with their futile concerns. Always do what is best for each other and for everyone; because this is what God wants you to do in Jesus the Prince.

Always be happy; keep praying, and be constantly grateful, because

this is what God wants you to do in Jesus the Prince.

Second Reading

A Treatise on Philipians by St. Ambrose

My dear brothers and sisters, God's love is calling us to the joys of eternal happiness for the rescue of our souls. You have just listened to the reading from the Emissary in which he says, "Always be happy in the Master." The joys of this world lead to eternal misery, but the joys that are in conformity with the Master's will bring those who persevere in them to joys that are enduring and eternal. And that is why the Emissary says, "I tell you again: be happy."

He urges us to find ever-increasing joy in God and in keeping his commandments. The more we try in this world to give ourselves completely to God our Master by obeying his commands, the greater will be our happiness in the life to come, and the greater the glory that will be ours in the presence of God.

"Your self-control should be evident to everyone." That is to say, your holiness of life must be evident, not only in the sight of God, but in the sight of men too; it must give an example of discipline and self-control to all your contemporaries on earth and also serve as a memorial of goodness before God and human beings.

"The Master is near; do not be worried." The Master is always near to all of those who call on his help with sincerity, true faith, sure hope, and perfect love. He knows what you need, even before you ask him. He is always ready to come to the aid of all his faithful slaves in every necessity. There is no reason for us to be in a state of anxiety when harm threatens us; we must remember that God is very near us as our protector. "The Master is nearby for those whose hearts are in turmoil, and he will save those who are depressed in spirit. There are many troubles for a virtuous person, but the Master will rescue him from all of them." If we do our best to obey and keep his commandments, he does not dawdle in giving us what he has promised.

"But in every prayer and petition, what you wish for should be made known to God with gratitude." In time of trouble, we must not grumble or be depressed; God forbid! We must rather be patient and cheerful, "and always show gratitude to God in everything."

The Master put my feet firmly on a rock and made my steps secure; he

put a new song in my mouth.

He heard my cry for help and rescued me from the abyss of ruin; he put a new song in my mouth.

Prayer

Dear Father, since you show your omnipotent power in your mercy and forgiveness, please continue to fill us with your gifts of love, and help us hurry toward the eternal life you promise and come to share in the joys of your Kingdom. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

SATURDAY

First Reading

Phil. 4.10-23

It gave me great happiness in the Master that your concern for me blossomed again just now, the way you used to care for me, until I stopped giving you the chance. I'm not saying this because I needed what you did; I've learned to manage by myself no matter where I am; I know how to do without, and I know how to have more than I need. I am familiar with all of it: to have a full stomach and to go hungry, to have too much and not to have enough; I have strength for everything by the one who gives me power. Still, it was nice of you to do your part in my hardship.

And you people in Philippi know that at the beginning of my reporting the good news, when I left Macedonia, you were the only community I let help me out in this business of giving and receiving; and that in Thessalonica you sent money I needed not once but twice. It isn't that what I want is the gift; what I care about is the profit you get and the interest it earns for you.

You see, I have all I need—I have more than enough, now that I have received your gift from Epaphroditus; but it is a fragrant offering, a fitting sacrifice, acceptable to God. And my God will fill every need you have from his wealth of glory in Prince Jesus. Glory to God our Father for ages upon ages. Amen.

40 Twenty-Sixth Week of Ordinary Time

Give each of the sacred people a kiss for me in Prince Jesus. The brothers and sisters with me send their regards; all the sacred people send best wishes, especially those in Caesar's retinue.

The blessings of the Master Prince Jesus
be with your spirits. Amen.

I know what it is like to be rich and what it is like to be poor; I have eaten well and gone hungry, and have experienced poverty and plenty; with the Prince's help I can do everything.

For the Prince's sake, I am content with my weaknesses and frustrations; with the Prince's help I can do everything.

Second Reading

*A Book on Christian Formation
by St. Gregory of Nyssa*

"Anyone who is in the Prince is a new creation; what is old has vanished." Now by the "new creation" Paul means the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in a heart that is pure and blameless, free of all malice, evil, or shamefulness; because when a soul has come to hate sin and has handed itself over as far as it can to the power of virtue, it undergoes a transformation by receiving the grace of the Spirit. Then it is healed, restored, and made completely new. In fact, the two texts, "Get rid of the old leaven so that you will be a new one," and "Let us celebrate the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth and not with the old leaven," support those passages that speak of the new creation.

Yet the tempter spreads many a snare to trap the soul, and of itself human nature is too weak to defeat him. This is why the Emissary tells us to arm ourselves with heavenly weapons, when he says, "Put on the breastplate of virtue, and have your feet shod with the Good News of peace, and put truth for a belt around your waist." Can you not see how many forms of rescue the emissary indicates, all leading to the same path and the same goal? By following them to the heights of God's commandments, we easily complete the race of life; because elsewhere the Emissary says, "We should each run with fidelity the race that has been set before us, with our eyes on Jesus, the origin and goal of our faith."

So a man who openly despises the accolades of this world and rejects all earthly glory must also practice self-repudiation. This "self-repudiation" means that you are never interested in your own will but God's will

as a sure guide; it also means owning nothing apart from what is jointly held. In this way, it will be easier for you to carry out your superior's command promptly, in joy and hope; because this is required of the Prince's slaves who are redeemed for service to their brothers and sisters. That is, this is what the Master wants when he says, "Anyone who wants to be first and great among you must be the last of all and the slave of everyone."

Our service of mankind must be given freely. One who is in such a position must be subject to everyone and serve the brothers and sisters as if he were working off a debt; and in addition, those who are in charge should work harder than the others and conduct themselves with greater submission than their own subjects. Their lives should serve as a visible example of what service means, and they should remember that those who are committed to their trust are held in trust from God.

Those, then, who are in a position of authority must look after their brothers and sisters as conscientious teachers look after the young children who have been entrusted to them by their parents. If both students and teachers have this loving relationship, then subjects will be happy to obey whatever is commanded, while superiors will be delighted to lead their brothers and sisters to perfection. If you try to outdo each other in showing respect, your life on earth will be like that of the angels.

You have been called to freedom, but don't use your freedom to indulge your flesh; serve each other out of love.

Do not be an obstacle to any Jew or Greek, or to God's community; serve each other out of love.

Prayer

Dear Father, since you show your omnipotent power in your mercy and forgiveness, please continue to fill us with your gifts of love, and help us hurry toward the eternal life you promise and come to share in the joys of your Kingdom. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



Twenty-Seventh Sunday
In ORDINARY TIME

First Reading

1Tim 1.1-20

Paul, an emissary of Jesus the Prince by the command of the God who rescued us and of Jesus the Prince who is our hope, to Timothy, my own true son in belief:

Blessings, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Jesus the Prince, our Master.

As I told you when I started for Macedonia, stay in Ephesus to warn some of the people there to give up teaching other views, and to stop getting involved in stories and interminable genealogies; what they lead to is arguments, not discovering God's plan in faith.

The purpose of this warning is love, from a pure heart, good conscience, and genuine belief; this is what these people have turned their backs on, and wandered into airy theories. They want to teach people "what their obligations are," and have no idea what they are saying, let alone what they think they have proved.

Of course, we know there is nothing wrong with the law, as long as it is treated as a law. That is, what we are aware of is that it doesn't apply to virtuous people; the people it applies to are criminals and insubordinates, irreligious and sinful people, and the unholy and profane: people who kill fathers or mothers or any other human being, who engage in casual sex or sex with other men, kidnapers, liars, and perjurers, and anything else that is the opposite of what healthy learning teaches, based on the report I was entrusted with of the good news about the dignity of our glorious God.

I'm grateful to our Master Jesus the Prince for giving me this power; that he thought fit to see me as faithful and appoint me to his service,

even though I used to be someone who cursed him and oppressed him, and was a conceited ass. But he felt sorry for me because I did what I did out of ignorance, because of my not having faith; and the blessings of our Master got poured all over me with belief and love in Jesus the Prince.

You can take what I am saying as true and as certain as anything can be: Jesus the Prince came into the world to rescue sinners, and I stand first among them. But he had mercy on me precisely so that Jesus the Prince would be able to demonstrate his absolute tolerance in my case as a prime example of those who were going to believe in him for eternal life. Honor and glory for all the ages of ages to the King of ages, the immortal, invisible, only God! Amen.

Anyway, I'm entrusting you with this warning I spoke of, Timothy, my son, because of a prophetic inspiration I was given a while ago about you, to have you be the one to fight the noble battle, since you have faith and a good conscience; some people have ignored their conscience and made a wreck of their faith—Hymenaeus and Alexander, for instance; and I let Satan have them so that they'd learn not to speak against God.

The Master's grace has been poured onto me in great profusion and has filled me with faith and love. Jesus the Prince came into this world to save sinners.

Everyone has sinned and is deprived of God's glory. Jesus the Prince came into this world to save sinners.

Second Reading

The Pastoral Guide by St. Gregory the Great

A spiritual guide should be silent when discretion calls for it, and speak when words are useful; otherwise, he may say what he should not or be silent when he should speak. Indiscreet speech may lead to error and an imprudent silence may leave in error those who could have been taught. Shepherds who do not have foresight hesitate to say openly what is right because they are afraid of losing prestige from others. As the voice of truth tells us, leaders like this are not zealous shepherds who protect their flocks, and are more like hired hands who run away by taking refuge in silence when a wolf appears.

The Master reprimands them through the prophet: "They are dumb dogs that cannot bark." On another occasion, he complains, "You did

44 Twenty-Seventh Week of Ordinary Time

not go out against your enemy or set up a wall in front of the house of Israel, so that you could stand firm in battle on the Master's day." To go out against the enemy involves a bold resistance to the powers of this world in defense of the flock; to stand firm in battle on the Master's day means to oppose the evil enemy out of love for what is right.

When a shepherd has been afraid to assert what is right, has he not turned his back and run away by remaining silent? But if he intervenes on behalf of the flock, he sets up a wall against the enemy in front of the house of Israel. And that is why the Master again says to his unfaithful people, "Your prophets saw false, silly visions and did not point out your immorality, so that you could change heart from your sins." The name "prophet" is sometimes given in the sacred writings to teachers who both announce the present to be fleeting and reveal what is to come. God's message accuses them of seeing false visions because they are afraid to castigate men for their faults and thereby lull evildoers with an empty promise of safety. Because they are afraid of criticism, they keep silent and fail to point out the sinners' wrongdoing.

A word of reprimand is a key that unlocks a door, because reprimand reveals a fault of which the evildoer is often unaware of himself. That is why Paul says of the bishop, "He must be able to encourage people in healthy teaching and refute those who oppose it." For the same reason, God tells us through Malachi, "A priest's lips are to preserve knowledge, and people are to look to him for the law, because he is the messenger of the Master of Armies." Finally, that is also the reason why the Master warns us through Isaiah, "Cry out and do not be quiet; raise your voice like a trumpet call."

Anyone ordained a priest undertakes the task of preaching, so that with a loud cry he can go on ahead of the terrible judge who is following him. Then if a priest does not know how to preach, what kind of cry can such a dumb herald utter? It was to bring this home that the Holy Spirit descended in the form of tongues on the first shepherds, because he causes those whom he has filled to speak out spontaneously.

I will teach disobedient people your ways, and sinners will return to you;
my tongue will sing of your virtue.

Please open my lips, Master, and my mouth will declare your praise;
my tongue will sing of your virtue.

Prayer

Dear Father, since your love for us surpasses all our hopes and desires, please forgive our failings, keep us in your peace, and lead us along the path of rescue. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

*First Reading**1 Tim. 2.1-15*

The very first thing I want you to do, Timothy, is to pray, and beg, and plead, and thank God for every human being; pray for the kings and everyone in a position of authority, that they'll allow us to live an undisturbed life with full respect and dignity. This is what is fitting and proper before the God who is our rescuer; he wants every human being to be saved and to arrive at the recognition of the truth. There is only one God, and there is only one link and liaison between God and human beings: the human Prince, Jesus, who sacrificed himself to set everyone free, and is the evidence for each person's opportunity for it.

—And this is what I was named herald and emissary for! It's true, this is no lie; I am a teacher for the Gentiles of what the faith and the truth is!

Anyway, I want all the men to offer these prayers in all the communities; they are to raise their sacred hands to God without all this quarreling or getting into arguments.

And the women should do the same; and they should be dressed properly, with reverence and decency, not with elaborate hair styles and their bodies full of gold and pearls or expensive clothes; they should do what is to be expected of women who advertise their respect for God with good deeds.

But a woman should be quiet and take in what is said submissively; I will not allow a woman to teach, or to be in a position of authority over a man; she is to be quiet. Adam, after all, was formed first, and then Eve came; and it was not Adam who was tricked, it was the woman who fell into sin by being tempted. Of course, she'll be rescued in that she's the one who gives birth to the Child—but women have to preserve their

46 Twenty-Seventh Week of Ordinary Time

faith and love and holiness carefully.

There is only one God and one link and liaison between God and man: the man Prince Jesus; he gave himself as ransom for us all.

He had to become like his brothers in every way so that he could show his sympathy for them; he gave himself as ransom for us all.

Second Reading *A Treatise on Cain and Abel by St. Ambrose*

“Offer God a sacrifice of praise and fulfill your vows to the Supreme Being.” If you praise God, you offer your vow and fulfill the promise you have made. So the Samaritan leper who was healed by the Master’s word of command gained greater credit than the other nine; he alone returned to the Prince, praising God and thanking him. Jesus told him, “There was no one to come back and thank God except this foreigner.’ He said to him, “Stand and go on your way; your faith has cured you.”

The Master Jesus, in his divine wisdom, taught you about the goodness of the Father, who knows how to give what is good, so that you would ask for what is good from Goodness itself. He urges you to pray fervently and frequently, not by offering long, tiresome prayers, but praying many times, and with perseverance. Lengthy prayers are usually filled with empty words, while neglect of prayer results in indifference to prayer.

Again, the Prince urges you to be especially generous to others when you ask forgiveness for yourself, so that your actions will reinforce your prayer. The Emissary also teaches you how to pray; you must avoid anger and quarrelsomeness, so that your prayer will be serene and healthy. He tells you also that every place is a place of prayer, though our Savior says, “Go to your room.”

But by “room” you must not understand a room enclosed by walls that imprison your body, but the room that is inside you, the room where you hide your thoughts and where you keep your emotions. This room for prayer is always with you wherever you are, and it is always a secret room, where only God can see you.

You are told to pray especially for the people: that is, for the whole body, with all its parts and cells, the family of your mother the Church. The sign of being a part of this body is love for each other. If you pray only for yourself, you pray for yourself alone. If each of us prays for

himself, he receives less from God's goodness than someone who prays on behalf of others; because the fact is that when each prays for everyone, everyone is praying for each one.

Finally, if you pray only for yourself, you will be praying, as I said, for yourself alone. But if you pray for everyone, everyone will pray for you, because you are included in "everyone." In this way, there is a great reward; through the prayers of each individual, the intercession of the whole people is gained for each individual. There is no pride here, only an increase of humility and a richer harvest from prayer.

Please listen, my God, to my cry for help; please pay attention to my prayer. I am calling to you from the ends of the earth.

You have received my vows, my God, and given me the heritage of those who hold your name in reverence. I am calling to you from the ends of the earth.

Prayer

Dear Father, since your love for us surpasses all our hopes and desires, please forgive our failings, keep us in your peace, and lead us along the path of rescue. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

1 Tim. 3.1-16

You can believe the saying that a man who is ambitious to be an overseer wants a good thing. But this implies that an overseer should have a good reputation, and be married only once; he should be sober, sensible, decent, hospitable, a good teacher, not a drinker, and not belligerent; he should be patient, conciliatory, and not miserly. He ought to be able to take good care of his own family, with children who obey him with complete respect—If he can't manage his family, how would he be able to manage God's community? He should not be a new convert, or he might become conceited and fall into the sin that condemned the

48 Twenty-Seventh Week of Ordinary Time

devil. And he also ought to have a good name with people outside the community, or they might start telling stories about him, and make him fall into the devil's trap.

The deacons should also be dignified and candid, people who don't drink much and aren't concerned about how much money they make; they should hold the secret of their belief in a clean conscience. They too should be examined about this, and if they qualify, they can begin their term of office. Their wives should also be dignified, not gossips, sober, and trustworthy in every way. Deacons should be married only once, and have good control over their children and household. If these officials do their work well, they earn a high place in the community, and have the right to speak publicly about the faith in Jesus the Prince.

I'm writing you this, even though I hope to go there soon, in case I get delayed; I want you to know how things should be organized in God's household—which, of course is the community of the living God, and the pillar and foundation of truth. There is no question that the secret of our relation to God is a great one: "The one who appeared materially has been revered spiritually, was seen by angels, proclaimed to the Gentiles, believed by the universe, raised into glory."

You must keep every member of the flock in your heart, because the Holy Spirit made you their shepherds; you must rule over the Church of God which he has made his own through the blood of his Son.

The great quality of a manager is to be faithful to his duty; you must rule over the Church of God which he has made his own through the blood of his Son.

Second Reading A Letter to the Trallians by St. Ignatius of Antioch

Ignatius, also called Theophorus, to the sacred community at Tralles in the province of Asia which is loved by God, the Father of Prince Jesus, is chosen and worthy of God, and enjoys peace in body and the Spirit through the suffering of Prince Jesus, who is our hope through our return to life when we rise to him: As the Emissaries did, I too send my greetings to you with the fullness of God's favor, and extend you my every best wish.

Reports of your splendid character have reached me: how you are beyond reproach and always unshaken in your patient steadfastness,

which are qualities that are yours by nature, not something you acquired. My informant was your own bishop Polybius, who by the will of God and Prince Jesus visited me here in Smyrna. He shared so fully in my joy at being in prison for the Prince that I came to see your whole community embodied in him. And also, when I learned from him about your God-given kindness toward me, I broke out in praise for God. It is on him, I discovered, that you pattern your lives.

Your submission to your bishop, who is in the place of Prince Jesus, shows me that you are not living as men usually do, but in the way Jesus himself lived, when he died for us so that you would escape death by belief in his death. And so one thing is necessary, and you already observe it, that you do nothing without your bishop; in fact, be subject to the clergy as well, and see in them the Emissaries of our hope Prince Jesus, because if we live in him, we will be found in him.

Deacons, too, who are servants of the mysteries of Jesus, should be pleasing to everyone in everything, because they are not mere servants with food and drink, but ambassadors of God's Church. And so they should guard themselves against anything deserving disapproval in the way they would guard against fire.

In the same way, everyone should respect the deacons as if they were Prince Jesus, just as everyone should regard the bishop as the image of the Father, and the clergy as God's senate and the college of the Emissaries. Without these three orders, you cannot begin to speak of a Church. I am confident that you share my feelings in this matter, because I have had an example of your love in the person of your bishop, who is with me now. His whole demeanor is a great lesson, and his very gentleness wields a mighty influence.

By God's grace, there are many things I understand—but I keep well within my limitations, for fear that pride will be my undoing. At the moment, then, I must be more apprehensive than ever, and pay no attention at all to those who are flattering me; their praise is like a whip; because even though I have a fierce desire to suffer martyrdom, I do not know whether I deserve it. Most people are not aware of my passionate longing, but it keeps attacking me with greater intensity. My present need, then, is for that humility by which the ruler of this world is overthrown.

And so I strongly urge you—or rather, not I, but the love of the

50 Twenty-Seventh Week of Ordinary Time

Prince—to feed yourself exclusively on Christian food, and keep away from the foreign food that is heresy. And you will do this if you are not arrogant or cut off from God, from Prince Jesus, from the bishop, and from the teachings of the Emissaries. Whoever is inside the sanctuary is pure; but anyone who is not is unclean. That is to say, whoever acts apart from the bishop and the clergy and deacons is not pure in his conscience. In writing this, it is not really that I am aware of anything of the sort among you; it is just that I want to forewarn you, because you are the children I love so deeply.

Please make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit through a peace that bonds you together; there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one single hope when you were called. There is one Master, one faith, and one Bath.

No one can lay a foundation other than the one that has been laid: Prince Jesus. There is one Master, one faith, and one Bath.

Prayer

Dear Father, since your love for us surpasses all our hopes and desires, please forgive our failings, keep us in your peace, and lead us along the path of rescue. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

1 Tim. 4.1-5.2

But the Spirit expressly says that as time goes on some people will turn away from their faith, and start believing in fraudulent spirits and following the teaching about semi-divinities, because they will be taken in by fallacious arguments that will sear their consciences: that marriage is forbidden, and that it is forbidden to eat some foods that God created to be enjoyed with gratitude by those who have the faith and know the truth. Every creature of God is good; and nothing has to be avoided if

it is eaten after thanking God for it; it has been made holy both by what God said and by the prayer.

If you tell things like this to the brothers and sisters, you'll be a good servant of Jesus the Prince, nourished with what the faith says and the good education you have had in it; stay away from the secular stories those old women make up.

And keep your religious self in trim. Physical exercise does do some good, but religious exercise is good for everything; it keeps you fit for this life and the next one. You can believe this, and there is no way you can deny it: "This is the reason we work and struggle; because we have hope in the living God, who is the rescuer of every human being"—and especially believers.

These are things for you to impress on people and teach them. No one should think less of you because you're young; make yourself an example for the believers in what you say, in how you act, in your love, your faith, and your purity.

Spend your time until I come in reading to the people, and in encouraging and teaching them. Don't neglect the favor that was given to you prophetically by the impositions of hands of Eldership. Preserve it and be involved in it, so that everyone will see your progress. Take care of yourself and your teaching; keep at it; if you do that, you'll save both yourself and the people who listen to you.

Don't correct an Elder; give him a suggestion as if he were your father; treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women with complete purity as sisters.

The value of spirituality is immeasurable, because it holds promise for our present life and the life after this. We sweat and struggle for this reason: we have put our trust in the living God.

We have been persecuted but never abandoned, knocked down but never out; we have put our trust in the living God.

Second Reading A Letter to the Trallians by St. Ignatius of Antioch

Please make yourselves considerate, and be born again in the faith which is the Master's body, and in the love which is the blood of Prince Jesus. No one ought to bear a grudge against his neighbor; never give the pagans the slightest pretext, so that the great majority who serve God

52 Twenty-Seventh Week of Ordinary Time

will not be ridiculed because of the carelessness of a few. “That person who is responsible for my name being slandered is doomed.”

So turn a deaf ear to the talk of anyone whose language has nothing to do with Prince Jesus, whose ancestor was David, who was really born to Mary, and really ate and drank. He was really persecuted under Pontius Pilate, and really died by crucifixion, in the sight of heavenly and earthly beings and those under the earth. He really came back from the dead, since he was raised from it by his Father. And those who believe in him will be raised like him by the Father; we will come back to life again in the Prince, without whom we do not have real life.

And so please avoid those poisonous growths that bear deadly fruit; the mere taste of them is sudden death. These growths are not of the Father’s planting; if they were, they would be recognized as branches of the cross, and their fruit would be imperishable. The cross of the Prince’s suffering is his invitation to those of you who are cells in his body; the head cannot come to life without the other parts of the body, since God, the very foundation of unity, has foretold this kind of union.

I am sending my regards from Smyrna and from all of God’s communities that are here with me. They have been a comfort to me in every way, both physically and spiritually. The chains which I wear for the sake of Prince Jesus, as I pray all the time to come to God, are my plea. Please continue to live together in that harmony you have, and persevere in prayer together. It is appropriate for everyone, and especially the priests, to give comfort to the bishop and thereby honor the Father, Prince Jesus, and his Emissaries.

I beg of you, if you love me, please listen to me, so that his letter of mine will not be evidence against you. And please pray for me too, not to be found undeserving, because in God’s mercy I need your love to make me fit for the destiny that is mine.

The communities in Smyrna and Ephesus send their best wishes. Please remember all the community in Syria in your prayers. I am not good enough to claim membership in it, since I am the most insignificant of all of them.

And now, my best regards in Prince Jesus. Be submissive to your bishop, as you would to God’s command, and also to the clergy. As individuals, love each other with undivided affection.

My life is being sacrificed for you, not only at this moment, but when

I come before God; though I am still in danger, God the Father, through Prince Jesus, is my pledge that my prayer and yours will be heard. My desire is that, through him, you will be found to be without fault.

Through the Good News, God has called you to share in the glory of our Master Prince Jesus; and so stand firm and hold fast to the traditions you have been taught.

The Master hates what is vile, and those who hold him in respect show no love for it either; and so stand firm and hold fast to the traditions you have been taught.

Prayer

Dear Father, since your love for us surpasses all our hopes and desires, please forgive our failings, keep us in your peace, and lead us along the path of rescue. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

THURSDAY

First Reading

1 Tim 5.3-25

Give the office of Widow only to real widows. If a widow has children or grandchildren, though, the first thing that should be done is for these people to learn to respect their own family and repay what they owe their parents and grandparents. A real Widow has no family, and only has hope in God; and her task is to worship and pray night and day. But the kind that live in luxury are dead. Tell them this, so they won't give people a chance to talk.

And the people who don't take care of their relatives, especially their immediate family, have rejected their faith and in fact are worse than unbelievers.

A woman should be given the title of Widow only if she is sixty years of age or more, was married only once, and gives evidence of her life with good deeds: for instance, that she brought up her children, was hospitable, washed the feet of the sacred people, supported people in

54 Twenty-Seventh Week of Ordinary Time

trouble, or pursued any good practice.

Don't allow younger widows to have the title; when their emotions lead them to another marriage instead of their commitment to the Prince, they become guilty of giving up the faith they first had; and at the same time they learn to waste their time; they go around from house to house, and then don't just waste time, they become gossips and busybodies, and talk about things they shouldn't. I'd rather have the younger ones get married, have children, take care of their house, and not give anyone who doesn't like them a chance to talk about them; in fact, there already are some of them who have turned back to Satan.

And if one of the believers has widows in her family, she is to see to their support and not put the burden on the community, so that the community can take care of the real Widows.

Elders who use their authority well should be given a double salary, especially those who work hard at speaking and teaching. Scripture says, "Do not muzzle a threshing ox," and "A worker deserves his pay."

Don't listen to a charge against an Elder unless it is backed up by "two or three witnesses." But expose publicly the ones who do do wrong, so that the rest will take warning from it. I am telling you in the presence of God and Prince Jesus and his chosen angels to keep this procedure intact, never to pre-judge the issue and never to act on your own inclinations. And don't be too quick to impose hands on anyone, or you might share the responsibility for another person's sins; keep yourself clean.

—And don't drink just water any more; drink wine every now and then to help your digestion and the health problems you have so often. Some people have sins that are obvious and cry out for punishment, and there are some that keep them quiet—and some people's good deeds are obvious too; but the ones who have secret virtues can't really hide them.

Behave in a way that is appropriate to the Good News of Prince Jesus, and with one mind and spirit work together for the faith. Do not look to your own interests; consider those of others.

In your attitude toward each other, be of the same mind as the Prince. Do not look to your own interests; consider those of others.

*Second Reading**A Letter to the Philadelphians
by St. Ignatius of Antioch*

Ignatius, also called Theophorus, to the community of God the Father and the Master Prince Jesus located at Philadelphia in the province of Asia, who have found mercy and been strengthened in the peace of God and are now full of happiness because of the suffering of our Master, and who, by his mercy, have become believers in his return to life: I send you my regards in the blood of Prince Jesus; you are my lasting, unshakeable joy, especially if your members remain united with the bishop and with his priests and deacons, who are all appointed in accordance with the mind of the Prince—who, by his own will, has strengthened them in the firmness which the Spirit gives.

I know that this bishop has not received his office by which he serves the community by his own efforts, nor does he have it from men or out of empty egotism; he has received it from the love of God the Father and the Master Prince Jesus. I am deeply impressed by his gentleness; and by his silence, he is more effective than empty talkers. He is in harmony with the commandments in the way a lute is with its strings. I consider that he has been blessed, then, for his feelings toward God, since I know them to be virtuous and perfect, and for his sensibility and calm, in which he imitates the gentleness of the living God.

Like sons of light and truth, run away from divisions and evil teaching; follow as his flock where your shepherd is. Because everyone who belongs to God and Prince Jesus is with the bishop; and everyone who changes heart and returns to the unity of the Church will also belong to God, so that they can live in conformity with Prince Jesus.

Do not be deceived, my brothers. If anyone follows a schismatic, “he will not receive the inheritance of God’s Kingdom.” If anyone lives by foreign teaching, he does not agree with the suffering of the Master. And so be careful to take part only in the one Eucharist, because there is only one flesh and blood of our Master Prince Jesus, and one cup to unite us with his blood, one altar and one bishop with the priests and deacons, who are his fellow servants. If you do this, then whatever you do, you will do in conformity with God.

My brothers, I am brimming over with love for you and with a joyous heart I am strengthening you—though it is not so much I, but Prince Jesus. Although I am imprisoned for his sake, I am more afraid of

56 Twenty-Seventh Week of Ordinary Time

my imperfection—but your prayers will make me perfect in God’s eyes so that I can still receive the inheritance promised me by the merciful God. I seek refuge in the person of the Prince through the Good News, and I appeal to the true service of the Church through the Emissaries.

You are built on the foundation of the Emissaries and prophets, with Prince Jesus himself as the cornerstone. You are being built in him into a temple where God will live in the Spirit.

Through him the whole structure is fitted together and grows into a holy temple in the Master. You are being built in him into a temple where God will live in the spirit.

Prayer

Dear Father, since your love for us surpasses all our hopes and desires, please forgive our failings, keep us in your peace, and lead us along the path of rescue. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

1 Tim. 6.1-10

Slaves who are still saddled with their burden are to think of their masters as having a right to complete respect, or they will make people speak badly about God’s name and our teaching; and if they have masters who are believers, they still shouldn’t resent them, because they are brothers; in fact, they should serve them better, because those who receive the benefit of their service are believers and people to be loved.

This is what you should teach and impress on people’s minds. And if anyone teaches something else and does not follow God-fearing teaching and a healthy way of thinking—the way of thinking of our Master Prince Jesus—then he is a pompous fool who doesn’t know anything; he is sick for puzzles and riddles that only lead to jealousy, bickering, sarcastic remarks, suspicions, and arguments. This is what happens to people who have destroyed their minds and turned away from the truth; they think religion ought to be “useful.”

Religion is, of course, very useful—when you aren't looking for benefits in this life. We didn't bring anything into this world, and we can't take anything out of it either; and if we have enough food and clothes for our backs, that is all we need. Those who want to get rich fall into trouble and traps and all kinds of stupid, poisonous urges that drown people in ruin and destruction. The root of everything bad is a love for money; and some people's desire for it has tempted them away from their faith and pierced them with all sorts of suffering.

Do not worry about your life, and what you are to eat, and your body and what you are to wear. Life is surely worth more than food and the body is more valuable than clothes.

As long as we have food and clothing, we should be content. Life is worth more than food and the body is more valuable than clothes.

Second Reading

First Instruction by St. Vincent of Lerins

Is there to be no development of religion in the Prince's Church? Of course there is to be development, and on the largest scale. Could anyone be so grudging to human beings and so full of hate for God as to try to prevent it?

But it must really be development of the faith, not alteration of the faith. Development means that each thing expands to be itself, while alteration means that a thing is changed from one thing into another. The understanding, knowledge, and wisdom of one and all, of individuals as well as of the whole Church, ought then to make great, vigorous progress with the passing of the ages and centuries, but only along its own line of development: that is, with the same teaching, the same meaning, and the same significance.

The religion of souls should follow the law of development of bodies. Though bodies develop and unfold their component parts with the passing of the years, they always remain what they were. There is a great difference between the flower of childhood and the maturity of age, but those who become old are the very same people who were once young. Though the condition and appearance of one and the same individual may change, it is one and the same nature, one and the same person.

The tiny limbs of unweaned children and the grown limbs of young men are still the same limbs. Men have the same number of limbs as

58 Twenty-Seventh Week of Ordinary Time

children. Whatever develops at a later age was already present in seminal form; there is nothing new in old age that was not already latent in childhood.

There is no doubt, then, that the legitimate and correct rule of development, the established and wonderful order of growth, is this: in order people the fullness of years always brings to completion those limbs and forms that the wisdom of the Creator fashioned beforehand in their earliest years.

If, however, the human form were to turn into some shape that did not belong to its own nature, or even if something were added to the sum of the parts of the body or subtracted from it, the whole body would necessarily die or become grotesque or at least enfeebled. In the same way, the teaching of the Christian religion should properly follow these laws of development: that is, by becoming firmer over the years, more full in the course of time, more elevated as it advances in age.

In ancient times, our ancestors planted good seeds in the harvest field of the Church. It would be very wrong and improper if their descendants—we—were to reap the intrusive growth of error and not the genuine wheat of truth. No, what is right and appropriate is this: there should be no inconsistency between first and last, and we should reap true teaching from the growth of true teaching, so that when, in the course of time, those first plantings yield an increase, it will flourish and be tended in our day also.

Israel, listen to the rules and regulations which I am teaching you. Do not add to what I command you or subtract from it.

The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. Do not add to what I command you or subtract from it.

Prayer

Dear Father, since your love for us surpasses all our hopes and desires, please forgive our failings, keep us in your peace, and lead us along the path of rescue. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

*First Reading**1 Tim. 6.11-21*

But you avoid this; you are God's man; and aim at virtue, holiness, faith, love, perseverance, and kindness; keep competing in faith's match, and you will win the prize of eternal life; this is what you were called to, and this is what you admitted publicly so well before so many witnesses.

And I'm telling you before God, who gives everything life, and Prince Jesus, who gave the same noble testimony before Pontius Pilate, obey orders meticulously until the appearance of our Master Prince Jesus; and the blessed and sole-powerful King of kings and Master of masters, the only one who has immortality as his own possession, whose home is inaccessible light, will make him appear in his own good time. Honor and eternal power to him. Amen

And tell the people who are rich in this world not to be proud because of it, and not to put their hopes in uncertain wealth, but in God, who bestows everything richly on us to enjoy; tell them to do good with their wealth, and make themselves rich in good deeds; to be ready to give it away and share it, and they will be investing in an account for the future, and the return on it will be real life.

Keep a guard, Timothy, over what was put in your care, and turn away from secular, empty mouthings and the contradictions that people call "knowledge"; the ones that preach this kind of thing miss the faith they are aiming at.

God's blessings on all of you.

Since you have accepted Jesus and Prince and Master, live in him; be rooted and built in him, so that you will always grow stronger in the faith that you were taught, and be filled with gratitude.

Do not amass earthly treasure for yourselves; store up heavenly treasure, and be filled with gratitude.

Second Reading

*A Homily on the Reports of the Good News
by St. Gregory the Great*

Let us listen to what the Master says as he sends out the emissaries: "The harvest is plentiful, but there are not many workers; and so pray to

60 Twenty-Seventh Week of Ordinary Time

the Harvest Master to send workers into his harvest.” We can speak only with a heavy heart about so few workers for so great a harvest, because, though there are a great number to hear the good news, there are only a few to report it. Look around you and see how full the world is of priests; yet in God’s harvest, a worker is rarely to be found, since even though we have accepted the priestly profession, we do not fulfill its demands.

My dear brothers, consider what has been said. “Pray to the Harvest Master to send workers into his harvest.” Pray for us to have the strength to work on your behalf, and for our tongues not to grow tired of preaching, and for us, after accepting the profession of preaching, not to have our silence condemn us before the just judge.

That is, a preacher’s tongue is often tied fast because of his own immorality, but on the other end, it sometimes happens that because of the people’s sins, what is said in preaching is taken away from those who preside over the meeting. In reference to the preacher’s situation, the psalmist says, “But God asks the sinner, ‘Why are you reciting my commandments?’” and, referring to the people, the Master tells Ezekiel, “I will make your tongue stick to the roof of your mouth, so that you will be dumb and not able to reprimand them, because they are a rebellious house.” He clearly means this: What is said in preaching will be taken away from you because as long as this people irritates me by what they do, they do not deserve to hear recommendations about the truth. It is not easy to know whose sinfulness is responsible for a preacher’s statements not being accepted, but it is beyond dispute that a shepherd’s silence will always harm his flock, even while it is often injurious to himself also.

There is something else about a shepherd’s life, my dear brothers, which discourages me a great deal—but to keep from having what I claim seem unjust to anyone, I accuse myself of the very same thing, even though I do not want to fall into it, and am forced by the necessity of these barbaric times. I am speaking of our absorption in external affairs. We accept the duties of our office, but by our actions we show that we are paying attention to something else. We abandon the service of preaching and, in my opinion, are called “bishops” to our detriment, because we keep the honorable office but neglect to practice the virtues that belong to it. Those who have been entrusted to us abandon God,

and we are silent. They fall into sin, and we do not reach out a hand in reproach.

But how can those of us who are neglecting ourselves be able to correct someone else? We are wrapped up in worldly concerns, and the more we devote ourselves to external things, the more insensitive we become in spirit.

And this is why the Church is right in saying about her own feeble members, "They made me keeper of the vineyards, but I have not maintained my own vineyard." We are appointed to guard the vineyards, but do not guard our own, because we become involved in irrelevant pursuits and neglect the performance of our service.

There is so great a harvest and so few to gather it; so pray to the Harvest Master, and beg him to send workers out into his harvest.

My people, put your trust in God at all times; pour your hearts out before him, and beg him to send workers out into his harvest.

Prayer

Dear Father, since your love for us surpasses all our hopes and desires, please forgive our failings, keep us in your peace, and lead us along the path of rescue. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

Twenty-Eighth Sunday In Ordinary Time

First Reading

Haggai 1.1-2.10

On the first of the sixth month in the second year of King Darius, God's message came through the prophet Haggai to the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, and to the high priest Joshua, son of Jehozadak:

“This is what is said by YHWH, who commands armies: ‘This people says, “The time has not come yet for rebuilding YHWH’s house.”’”
Then God’s message came through the prophet Haggai: “Is it time for you to live in your own paneled houses, while this house stays in ruins?
“Now this is what is said by YHWH, who commands armies:

‘Consider what you are doing!

You have planted a great deal and harvested only a little;
you have eaten and not been satisfied;
you have drunk and not been gladdened by it,
and dressed yourselves without becoming warm;
and the one who has earned his wages
earned them for a bag that has holes.’

“This is what is said by YHWH, who commands armies:

‘Consider what you are doing!

Go up into the hill country;
bring timber, build the house
so that I can enjoy myself in it
and receive my homage,’ says YHWH.

‘You expected a great deal, but it came to very little,
and what you brought home, I blew away.

‘And why is this?’ asks YHWH, who commands armies.

‘It is because my house remains in ruins
 while each of you hurries off to his own house.
 And that is why the heavens kept their dew away from you,
 and the earth held back her crops.
 And I called for a drought
 on the land and the mountains—
 on the grain, the wine, and the oil,
 and on everything produced by the ground,
 on men and beasts
 and everything that is produced by hand.’”

Then Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, and the high priest Joshua, son of Jehozadak, and all the remainder of the people listened to what was said by their God YHWH, and to what the prophet Haggai told them, because their God YHWH had sent him, and the people were afraid because of YHWH. And YHWH’s messenger Haggai announced to the people as YHWH’s message, “‘I am with you,’ says YHWH.”

Then YHWH aroused the spirit of the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, and the spirit of the high priest Joshua, son of Jehozadak, and the spirit of all the remainder of the people, so that they came and set about to work on the house of YHWH, who commands armies, their God on the twenty-fourth of the sixth month.

In the second year of King Darius, on the twenty-first of the seventh month, YHWH’s message came through the prophet Haggai: “Tell this to the governor of Judah, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, and the high priest Joshua, son of Jehozadak, and the remainder of the people:

‘Is there anyone left among you
 who saw this house in its former glory?

And how do you see it now?

Does it not seem like nothing in your eyes?

But now be brave, Zerubbabel,’ says YHWH,

‘and take courage Joshua, high priest, son of Jehozadak,
 and be brave, all you people in the land,’

says YHWH, ‘and work!

Because I am with you,’ says YHWH, who commands armies.

‘This is the agreement I made with you
 when you came out of Egypt;

64 Twenty-Eighth Week of Ordinary Time

and my spirit stays among you.

Do not be afraid!

Because this is what is said by YHWH, who commands armies:

‘One moment more, a little while,
and I will shake the sky and the earth,
the sea and the dry land;

I will shake all the nations,
and the treasures of all the nations will come in,

and I will fill this house with glory,’
says YHWH, who commands armies.

‘The silver is mine, and the gold belongs to me,’
says YHWH, who commands armies.

‘The glory of this house in the future
will be greater than its past glory,’
says YHWH, who commands armies;

‘and this is the place in which I will bestow peace,’
says YHWH, who commands armies.

Go up into the hill country and build a house, and I will enjoy myself in it, says the Master.

My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations, and I will enjoy myself in it, says the Master.

Second Reading

A Commentary on Haggai by St. Cyril of Alexandria

When our Savior came, he appeared as a divine Temple, glorious beyond comparison, far more splendid and exquisite than the older Temple. He was as much greater than the old Temple as worship in the Prince and the Good News is greater than the cult of the laws, and as much greater as truth is than its shadows.

In addition, I should point out that originally there was only one Temple in Jerusalem, in which only one people, the descendants of Israel, offered their sacrifices. Since the only Son God ever fathered became like us, and, as Scripture says, though he was “Master and God, he has shone upon us,” the rest of the world has been filled with places of worship. Now there are countless worshipers who honor the God of everyone with spiritual offerings and fragrant sacrifices. And this is surely

what Malachi foretold, when he said, as if he were in the person of God, “I am a great King, says the Master; my name is honored among the nations, and everywhere there is offered to my name the fragrance of a pure sacrifice.”

And so it is perfectly just for us to say that the final Temple, the Church, will be more glorious than the previous one. And Haggai declares that a gift will be made to those who are so concerned about the Church and are working in its construction, a gift from heaven given by the Savior; and that gift is the Prince himself, everyone’s peace; “through him we have access in the one Spirit to the Father.”

The prophet goes on to say, “I will give peace to this place and peace of soul to save all those who lay the foundation of this Temple.” The prince also says somewhere, “My peace is what I give you.” Paul will teach how beneficial this is for those who love: “The peace of the Prince,” he says, “which goes beyond all understanding, will keep your minds and hearts firm.” The seer Isaiah made the same prayer: “Master our God, please give us peace, because you have given us everything.” Once a man has been found deserving of the Prince’s peace, he can easily save his soul and guide his mind to carrying out exactly the demands of virtue.

And so Haggai declares that peace will be given to all of those who are building. A person builds the Church either as a teacher of the sacred mysteries, as one set over the House of God, or as one who works for his own good by setting himself there as a living, spiritual stone “in the holy Temple, God’s residence in the Spirit.” The results of these efforts will benefit people like this so that each one will be able to gain his own rescue without difficulty.

It is blessing for people to make your house our home, Master; they will praise you forever.

Many nations will join the Master on that day, and they will be his people; they will praise you forever.

Prayer

Dear Master, our help and guide, please make your love the foundation of our lives, and may our love for you express itself in our eagerness to do good for others We make this request through our Master Prince

Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

 onδay

First Reading

Haggai 2.11-24

On the twenty-fourth of the ninth month in the second year of King Darius, YHWH's message came to the prophet Haggai:

“This is what is said by YHWH, who commands armies: ‘Ask the priests for a decision: If a man carries consecrated meat in his pocket, and the meat touches bread or stew or wine or oil or any other food, do they become consecrated?’” The priests answered, “No.”

Then Haggai said, “If a person who is unclean from contact with a corpse touches any of these things, do they become unclean?” The priests answered, “They do become unclean.” Then Haggai continued, “‘And that is what this people and this nation is

in my sight,’ says YHWH,

‘And so is everything their hands do;

and what they offer here is unclean.

But now, think of this day forward. Before there was a stone laid on a stone in YHWH's Temple, how well did you do?

When one of you went to a pile of grain for twenty cups,

it would yield him only ten;

when someone else went to the vat to draw fifty cups,

there would be only twenty there.

I assaulted you in everything your hands did

with blight, searing wind, and hail;

yet you did not return to me,’ says YHWH.

‘Consider from this day on: from the twenty-fourth of the ninth month: from the day on which YHWH's Temple was founded, consider:

The seeds have not sprouted,

and the vines, the figs, the pomegranates,

and the olive trees have had no fruit.

From this day on, I will send blessings!’”

YHWH's message came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth of the month: “Tell this to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah:

‘I will shake the sky and the earth;
 I will overthrow the thrones in various kingdoms,
 and destroy the power of the Gentiles’ kingdoms.
 I will overpower the chariots and their riders
 and the riders on their horses
 will go down from each others’ swords.
 On that day,’ says YHWH, who commands armies,
 ‘I will take you, Zerubbabel,
 son of Shealtiel, my slave,’ says YHWH,
 ‘and I will set you in the way a signet ring is set,
 because I have chosen you,’ says YHWH, who commands armies.”

I will shake the sky and the earth, and the treasures of all the nations will come in.

The glory of this house will be great, and I will bestow peace on this place, and the treasures of all the nations will come in.

Second Reading

*A Treatise against Fabianus
 by St. Fulgentius of Ruspe*

In our offering of the holy sacrifice, we fulfill the command of our Savior, as recorded by the Emissary Paul: “Master Jesus, on the night in which he was betrayed, took bread and after thanking God for it, he tore it apart, and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you. Do this to remind yourselves of me. In the same way, after the dinner was over, he took the cup and said, ‘This cup is the new Treaty in my blood. Do this, whenever you drink it, to remind yourselves of me’; because as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are to announce the death of the Master until he comes.”

This sacrifice is offered, then, to announce the Master’s death; it is offered in memory of the one who gave up his life for us. As he says, “No one has greater love than this: to give up his life for the ones he loves.” Because the Prince died for us out of love, we ask, when we recall his death at the time of sacrifice, that we will also be granted love through the coming of the Holy Spirit. We pray that by the love the Prince had for us when he braved the cross, we will receive the grace of the Spirit and be crucified as far as the world is concerned, and the world will be crucified in our eyes. “In the death the Prince died, he died to sin, once

and for all; but the life he lives he lives for God.” Let us imitate the Master’s death, and also “live a new life.” Since we are strengthened with the gift of his love, let us die to sin and live for the Master.

“That is, God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.” In fact, our sharing in the Master’s body and blood when we eat his bread and drink from his cup teaches us that we should die to the world, and that we should keep our life “hidden with the Prince in God, by crucifying our matter with its vices and evil desires.”

That is why all the faithful who love God and their neighbors really drink from the cup of the Master’s love even though they may not drink from the cup of his physical suffering. And as they become drunk from it, they kill whatever in their nature is rooted in earth. They dress themselves with the Master Prince Jesus and do not indulge material desires; they do not fix their eyes on visible things; they contemplate things which the eye cannot see. In this way, they drink from the Master’s cup by preserving the holy bond of love; without it, even if a man were to “hand over his body to be burned,” he gains nothing. But the gift of love enables us to become in reality what we celebrate as mystery in the sacrifice.

Jesus took bread, thanked God for it, and tore the bread apart; then he gave it to his students and said, “This is my body, which is given up for you. Do this in memory of me.

“This is the bread that comes down from heaven; anyone who eats this bread will live forever. This is my body, which is given up for you. Do this in memory of me.”

Prayer

Dear Master, our help and guide, please make your love the foundation of our lives, and may our love for you express itself in our eagerness to do good for others. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

Zechariah 1.1-2.4

In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, YHWH's message came to the prophet Zechariah, son of Barachiah, son of Iddo:

“Yes, YHWH was angry with your ancestors . . . and say to them, ‘This is what is said by YHWH, commander of armies: “Return to me, says YHWH, commander of armies, and I will return to you, says YHWH, commander of armies. Do not be like your ancestors, to whom the former prophets gave this warning: This is what is said by YHWH, commander of armies: turn away from your evil ways and your immoral practices; but they would not listen or pay attention to me, says YHWH. Where are your ancestors? And as to the prophets, can they live forever? And what of my message and my rules which I entrusted to my slaves the prophets? Did they not catch up with your ancestors? They changed heart then and confessed, ‘YHWH, commander of armies, has treated us as our ways and actions deserved, just as he had specified that he would.’””

On the twenty-fourth of Shebat, the eleventh month of the second year of Darius, YHWH's message came to the prophet Zechariah, son of Berechiah, son of Iddo, in this way: I had a vision during the night. There appeared the rider of a red horse, standing among myrtle trees in a shady place; and behind him were red, sorrel, and white horses.

I asked, “What are these, my Master?” and the angel who spoke with me answered, “I will show you what they are.” The man who was standing among the myrtle trees spoke up and said, “These are the ones YHWH has sent to patrol the earth.” And they answered YHWH's angel who was standing among the myrtle trees, and said, “We have patrolled the earth, and now the whole earth is calm and at rest.”

Then YHWH's angel spoke out and said, “YHWH, commander of armies, how long will you be without mercy for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah that have felt your anger these seventy years?” And YHWH replied with words of comfort to the angel who spoke with me.

Then the angel who spoke with me said, “Announce this: This is what is said by YHWH, commander of armies: ‘I am profoundly moved by Jerusalem and Zion, and I am extremely angry with the complacent

70 Twenty-Eighth Week of Ordinary Time

nations; and though I was only slightly angry, they added to the harm. And so, says YHWH, I will turn to Jerusalem in my mercy; my house will be built in it, says YHWH, commander of armies, and a measuring line will be stretched over Jerusalem.' Announce further, 'This is what is said by YHWH, commander of armies: My cities will again overflow with prosperity; YHWH will once again be the comfort of Zion, and again choose Jerusalem.'"

I raised my eyes and looked; and there were four horns. Then I asked the angel who spoke with me what these were; and he answered, "These are the horns that scattered Judah and Israel and Jerusalem."

Then YHWH showed me four blacksmiths, and I asked, "What are these people coming to do?" and he said, "Here are the horns that scattered Judah, so that no one could raise his head any longer; but these people have come to terrify them: to throw down the horns of the nations that raised their horns to scatter the land of Judah."

I am turning toward Jerusalem in pity, and my house will be rebuilt there.

The city had no need of the sun or the moon for light, because its lamp was the Lamb; and my house will be rebuilt there.

Second Reading

An Instruction by St. Columban

How privileged, and how lucky, are "those slaves the Master will find awake when he comes." It is a blessing to have this time of waiting when we stay awake for the Master, the Creator of the universe, who fills everything and goes beyond everything.

How I wish he would waken me, this poor slave of his, from the sleep of laziness, even though I do not matter much. How I wish he would light in me that fire of divine love! The flames of his love burn beyond the stars; may the longing for his overwhelming pleasures and the divine fire always burn inside me!

How I wish I really deserved to have my lantern always burning at night in the Temple of my Master, to give light to everyone who enters my God's house. Please give me, I beg you, Master, in the name of Prince Jesus, your Son and my God, that love that does not fail, so that my lantern will be always lighted and never go out as it burns inside me and gives light to others.

Jesus, our supremely loving Savior, would you please light our lanterns, so that they will burn in your Temple forever, and receive eternal light from you, who are eternal light, to make our darkness bright and ward off the world's darkness from us.

Please give your light to my lantern, I beg you, my Jesus, so that by its light I will be able to see that holy place of all holy places which receives you as the eternal priest entering among the columns of your great temple. Let me only see you, look on you, and long for you; may I gaze lovingly on you alone, and have my lantern always shine and burn in your presence.

Loving Savior, please reveal yourself to those of us who are knocking, so that in knowing you we will love only you, love you alone, and desire and contemplate only you day and night, and always think of you. Inspire in us the depth of love that is fitting for you to receive as God; may your love so pervade our whole being, possess us completely, and fill all our senses that we will know no other love but love for you, the one who is eternal. May our love be so great that the many oceans of the sky, land, and sea cannot extinguish it in us: "a great deal of water cannot extinguish love."

Please let this saying be fulfilled in us too, at least in part, by your gift, our Master Prince Jesus, who should receive glory through all the ages of ages. Amen.

The sun will no longer be your light during the day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you at night; the Master will be your eternal light, and your God will be your glory.

Your sun will never set and your moon will not diminish away; the Master will be your eternal light, and your God will be your glory.

Prayer

Dear Master, our help and guide, please make your love the foundation of our lives, and may our love for you express itself in our eagerness to do good for others. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.


 ednesday
*First Reading**Zechariah 3.1-4.14*

YHWH showed me the high priest Joshua standing before YHWH's angel, while Satan stood at his right to accuse him. YHWH's angel said to Satan, "May YHWH reprimand you, Satan, may YHWH, who has chosen Jerusalem, reprimand you! Is not this man a brand plucked out of the fire?"

Joshua, meanwhile, was standing before the angel, dressed in filthy clothes. The angel spoke, and said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes and dress him in clothes for a feast." He added, "Put a clean miter on his head." And they put a clean miter on his head and dressed him with the clothes. Then YHWH's angel stood up and said, "You see, I have taken away your guilt."

YHWH's angel then gave Joshua this assurance: "This is what is said by YHWH, who commands armies: 'If you walk in my ways and pay attention to my commission, you will be a judge over my house and preside over my courts, and I will give you access among those standing here. Listen, High Priest Joshua: You and your associates who sit in your presence are men of good omen. Yes, I will bring my slave the Shoot. Look at the stone I have placed before Joshua, one stone with seven facets; I will engrave its inscription,' says YHWH, commander of armies, 'and I will take away the guilt of the land in one day. On that day,' says YHWH, commander of armies, 'you will invite each other under your vines and fig trees.'"

Then I said to the angel who was speaking with me, "What is all this, my master?" and the angel who was speaking with me answered, "Do you not know what this is?" and I said, "No, my master."

Then he told me, "This is YHWH's message to Zerubbabel: 'It is not by an army, and not by power, but by my Spirit,' says YHWH, commander of armies. 'What are you, huge mountain? You are only a plain before Zerubbabel. He will bring out the cornerstone among exclamations of "Hail! Hail" to it.'"

This message from YHWH then came to me: "The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundations of this house, and his hands will finish it; then you will know that YHWH, commander of armies, has sent

me to you. Because even the ones who sneered on that day of small beginnings will be glad to see the select stone in the hands of Zerubbabel. These seven facets are the eyes of YHWH, ranging over the whole earth.”

Then the angel who was speaking with me returned and awakened me in the way a man is wakened from sleep. “What do you see?” he asked me.

“I see a lampstand of pure gold, with a bowl at the top,” I answered. “On it are seven lamps with their tubes, and beside it are two olive trees, one at its right and the other at its left.” I then asked him, “What are these two olive trees at each side of the lampstand?”

I asked again, “What are the two olive tufts that gush out fresh oil through the two golden channels?”

“Do you not know what these are?” he asked.

“No, my master,” I answered.

He said, “These are the two anointed people who stand by the Master of the whole earth.”

These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand in the presence of the Master of the earth.

The Master will select his two witnesses to prophesy, that stand in the presence of the Master of the earth.

Second Reading

*An inquiry to Thalassius
by St. Maximus the Confessor*

The lamp set on the lampstand is Prince Jesus, the true light from the Father, the light that shines on every man who comes into the world. In taking our own flesh, he has become, and is appropriately called, a lamp, because he is the connatural wisdom and Word of the Father. He is proclaimed in the Church of God in accordance with orthodox faith, and is elevated and resplendent among the nations through the lives of those who live virtuously in observance of the Commandments.

So he gives light to everyone in the house—that is, in this world—just as he, God the Word, says himself: “No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket; he puts it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.” Clearly, he is calling himself the lamp, since he is by nature God and became flesh in accordance with God’s saving purpose.

I think the great David understood this when he spoke of the Master as a lamp, and said, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” That is, God frees us from the darkness of ignorance and sin, and hence he is saluted as a lamp in Scripture.

And like a true lamp, he alone dispelled the gloom of ignorance and the darkness of evil and became the way to rescue for everyone. Through virtue and knowledge, he leads to the Father those who resolve to walk in his way, which is the way of virtue, in obedience to the divine Commandments. He has set the holy Church up as the lampstand, over which the Word of God sheds light through its preaching, and illuminates with the rays of truth whoever is in this house which is the world, and fills everyone’s minds with divine knowledge.

This Word is extremely averse to being kept under a basket; he wants to be set on a high place, upon the sublime beauty of the Church. That is, while the Word was hidden under the basket—in other words, under the letter of the Law—it deprived everyone of eternal light, because then it could not give spiritual contemplation to those who were making efforts to strip themselves of a sensuality that is illusory, capable only of deceit, and able to perceive only transitory bodies like their own.

But the Word wills to be set upon a lampstand, the Church, where rational worship is offered in the Spirit, so that it can illuminate everyone. That is, the letter, when it is not spiritually understood, has only a material sense, which restricts its expression and does not allow the real force of what is written to reach the hearer’s mind.

And so, we should not light the lamp of contemplation and action only to put it under a basket—I mean the lamp which is the illuminating Word of knowledge—or we will be condemned by restricting by the letter the incomprehensible power of wisdom. We should place it instead upon the lampstand of holy Church on the heights of true contemplation, where it will kindle for everyone the light of divine teaching.

Walk while you still have the light and do not let darkness overtake you; and while you have the light believe in the light so that you will become children of light.

I came into the world to make the blind see; and while you have the light believe in the light so that you will become children of light.

Prayer

Dear Master, our help and guide, please make your love the foundation of our lives, and may our love for you express itself in our eagerness to do good for others. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

*First Reading**Zechariah 8.1-17, 20-23*

This message came from YHWH, commander of armies: “This is what is said by YHWH, commander of armies:

‘I am intensely jealous for Zion;

I am stirred to jealous rage for her.’

This is what YHWH says:

‘I will return to Zion,

and I will make my home in Jerusalem;

Jerusalem will be called the faithful city,

and the mountain of YHWH, commander of armies,

the holy mountain.”

“This is what is said by YHWH, commander of armies: ‘Old men and old women, each with canes in their hands because of their age, will again sit in the streets of Jerusalem. The city will be filled with boys and girls playing in her streets.’

“This is what is said by YHWH, commander of armies: ‘Even if this seems impossible in the eyes of the remainder of the people, will it be impossible in my eyes too?’ says YHWH, commander of armies.

“This is what is said by YHWH, commander of armies: ‘Now I will rescue my people from the land of the rising sun, and from the land of the setting sun. I will bring them back to make homes inside Jerusalem. They will be my people and I will be their God, with loyalty and justice.’

“This is what is said by YHWH, commander of armies: ‘Your hands must be strong, if you are the ones who in these days hear the words spoken by the prophets on the day when the foundation of the house of YHWH, commander of armies, was laid for the building of the Temple.

76 Twenty-Eighth Week of Ordinary Time

The reason is that before those days, there were no wages for people or rent for animals; those who came and went had no security from enemies, because I set every man against his neighbor. But now I will not deal with the remainder of this people as I did in the past days,' says YHWH, commander of armies, 'because it is the seedtime of peace; vines will yield their fruit, the land will bear its crops, and the sky will give its dew; I will have the remainder possess all this. Just as you were a curse among the nations, house of Judah and house of Israel, I will save you so that you will be a blessing; do not be afraid, and let your hands be strong.'

"This is what it said by YHWH, commander of armies: 'In the same way as I determined to harm you when your ancestors provoked me to rage,' says YHWH, commander of armies, 'and I did not relent, in these days I have determined to favor Jerusalem and the house of Judah. Do not be afraid. This is what you should do: Speak the truth to each other; let there be honesty and peace in the judgments at your gates, and none of you must plot harm against anyone else in his heart, or love a false oath. These are all things that I hate,' says YHWH.

"This is what is said by YHWH, commander of armies: 'There will again come peoples, inhabitants of many cities; and the inhabitants of one city will approach those of another, and say, "Come, let us go and beg for YHWH's favor," and "I will also go and look for YHWH." Many peoples and strong nations will come looking for YHWH, commander of armies, in Jerusalem and beg favor from YHWH.'

"This is what is said by YHWH, commander of armies: 'In those days, ten men of every nationality, speaking different languages, will take hold—yes, take hold—of every Jew by the edge of his clothes, and say, "Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you."'"

This is what is said by the Master: "I will rescue my people from the lands of the east and the lands of the west. Your hands should be strong if you are the ones who hear these words announced by the prophets.

You are the children of the prophets, heirs of the Treaty God made with our ancestors. Your hands should be strong if you are the ones who hear these words announced by the prophets.

Second Reading

A treatise on John by St. Augustine

“No one comes to me unless the Father draws him.” Do not think that you are drawn against your will; the will is also drawn by love. We must not be afraid of men who weigh words but are far from understanding what belongs especially to divine truth. They may find fault with this passage of Scripture, and say to us, “How can I believe of my own free will if I am drawn to believe?” My answer is, “It is not enough that you are moved by the will, because you are also drawn by desire.”

What does this mean, to be drawn by desire? “Take pleasure in the Master, and he will give you the desires of your heart.” The heart has its own desires; it takes pleasure, for example, in the bread from heaven. The poet could say, “Everyone is drawn by his own desire”—not by necessity, but by desire, not by compulsion, but by pleasure. We can say then with greater force that one who finds pleasure in truth, happiness, virtue, and eternal life, is drawn to the Prince, because the Prince is all of these.

Are our bodily senses to have their desires, but not the will? If the will does not have its desires, how can Scripture say, “Mortal men will find their hope under the shadow of your wings; they will drink their fill from the plenty of your house, and you will give them a drink from the running stream of your pleasures, because the spring of life is with you, and in your illumination we will see light.”

Show me someone who loves; he knows what I mean. Show me someone who is full of longing, one who is hungry, one who is a pilgrim and suffering from thirst in the desert of this world, eager for the spring in the homeland of eternity; show me someone like this, and he knows what I mean. But if I speak to someone without feeling, he does not understand what I am saying.

You have only to show a leafy branch to a sheep, and it is drawn to it. If you show nuts to a boy, he is drawn to them. He runs to them because he is drawn, drawn by love, drawn without any physical force, drawn by a chain attached to his heart. “Everyone is drawn by his own desire.” This is a true saying, and earthly delights and pleasures, when set before those who love them, succeed in drawing them.

If this is so, are we to say that the Prince, revealed and set before us by the Father, does not draw us? What does the soul desire more than truth? Then why does the soul have hungry jaws, a spiritual palate, so to speak, sensitive enough to enjoy the truth, unless it is to eat and drink wisdom, virtue, truth, and eternal life?

78 Twenty-Eighth Week of Ordinary Time

“It is a blessing to be hungry and thirsty for virtue”—that is, here on earth. “These people will be satisfied”—that is, in heaven. The Prince says, “I give each person what he loves; I give each one the object of his hope; he will see what he believed in when he did not see it; he will drink to the full what he now is thirsty for. When? At the time when the dead come back to life, because “I will bring him back to life on the last day.”

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. All those who have listened to the Father and learned from him come to me.

It is written in the prophets: They will all be taught by God. All those who have listened to the Father and learned from him come to me.

Prayer

Dear Master, our help and guide, please make your love the foundation of our lives, and may our love for you express itself in our eagerness to do good for others. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

Malachi 1.1-14, 2.13-16

A prophesy: The message of YHWH to Israel through Malachi.

“I have loved you,” says YHWH.

But you say, “How have you loved us?”

“Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” says YHWH;

“and I loved Jacob and hated Esau.

I made his mountains a wasteland,

his heritage a desert for jackals.

If Edom says, “We have been crushed,

but we will rebuild the ruins,”

this is what is said by YHWH, commander of armies:

“Yes, they may build, but I will tear down,

and they will be called the land of guilt,

the people with whom YHWH is angry forever.

Your own eyes will see it, and you will say,

‘YHWH is great, even beyond the land of Israel.’
A son honors his father
and a slave his master;
and so if I am a father,
where is the honor due to me?
And if I am a master,
where is the reverence I deserve?’
This is what is said by YHWH, commander of armies, to you priests
who despise his name.
But you ask, “How have we despised his name?”
“By offering polluted food on my altar!”
Then you ask, “How have we polluted it?”
“By saying that YHWH’s table may be slighted!
When you offer a blind animal for sacrifice,
is this not evil?
When you offer the lame or the sick,
is it not evil?
Present it to your governor; see if he will accept it,
or welcome you,” says YHWH, commander of armies.
“So now if you beg God for mercy on us
when you have done things like this,
will he welcome any of you?”
says YHWH, commander of armies.
“If only one of you would shut the Temple gates
to keep from kindling useless fire on my altar!
I have no pleasure in you,” says YHWH, commander of armies,
“and I will not accept any sacrifice from your hands,
because from the rising of the sun to its setting
my name is great among the nations;
and everywhere they bring sacrifice to my name
and a pure offering;
because my name is great among the nations,”
says YHWH, commander of armies.
“But you behave profanely toward me by thinking
YHWH’s table and its offering may be polluted
and its food slighted.
You also say, ‘What a burden!’

80 Twenty-Eighth Week of Ordinary Time

and you scorn it," says YHWH, commander of armies;
"you bring in what you catch, or the lame, or the sick;
yes, you bring it as a sacrifice.
Shall I accept it from your hands?"

Says YHWH.

The deceiver who has a male in his flock is cursed,
if under his vow he sacrifices a gelding to YHWH;
because I am a great king," says YHWH, commander of armies,

"and my name will be respected among the nations.

You do this also: you cover YHWH's altar
with tears, weeping and groaning,
because he no longer looks on your sacrifice
or accepts it favorably from your hand;

and you say, 'Why is it?'

Because YHWH is witness

between you and the wife of your youth,
with whom you have broken faith,
though she is your companion, your betrothed wife.

Did he not make one being, with flesh and spirit,
and what does that one require but godly offspring?

You must then safeguard the life that is your own,
and not break faith with the wife of your youth;
because I hate divorce,"

says YHWH, the God of Israel,

"and covering your clothes with vice,"

says YHWH, commander of armies.

"You must then safeguard the life that is your own,
and not break faith."

I made a treaty with the priest Levi. In it I promised him life and peace.
I filled him with fear, and he respected me. His teaching was true, and
no dishonesty fell from his lips.

The Master has sworn an oath which he will not recant: You are a
priest forever in the line of Melchisedek. His teaching was true, and no
dishonesty fell from his lips.

*Second Reading**The City of God by St. Augustine*

Every action that brings about our union with God in a holy fellowship is a true sacrifice; that is, every action which is referred to that final end, that ultimate good, by which we are able to be happy in the true sense. It follows that even the kind of mercy by which help is given to a man is not a sacrifice unless it is done for God's sake. Sacrifice, even though it is performed or offered by a human being, is something divine; and that is why the ancient Latins gave it this name of "sacrifice," that is, of something sacred. Man himself, who is consecrated in the name of God and vowed to God, is therefore a sacrifice to the extent that he dies to the world in order to live for God. And this is also part of mercy, the mercy that each of us has for himself. Scripture tells us, "Have mercy on your soul by pleasing God."

Deeds of mercy, then, done either to ourselves or our neighbor and referred to God, are true sacrifices. But deeds of mercy are performed for no other reason than to free us from misery and by this means to make us happy—and we cannot be happy except through the good that Scripture speaks of: "It is good for me to be attached to God." It obviously follows that the whole redeemed city—that is, the assembly and community of the saints—is offered to God as a universal sacrifice through the great high priest, who in the nature of a slave offered even himself for us in his suffering, so that we would be the body of so great a head. He offered this nature of a slave; he was offered in that nature, because in that nature he is the liaison, in that nature he is the high priest, and in that nature he is the sacrifice.

The Emissary urges us to present our bodies "as a living sacrifice which is holy and pleasing to God, and as our spiritual worship," and not to follow the pattern of this world but to be transformed by the renewal of our minds and hearts, to that we will be able to discern what the will of God is, and what is good and pleasing and perfect: the total sacrifice that is ourselves. "By the grace of God that has been given to me," he says, "I tell all of those among you, 'Do not think more highly of yourselves than you should; judge yourselves with moderation in accordance with the degree of faith that God has given each of you.' In the same way as we have many parts in the same body, and yet all the parts do not have the same function, we are also many individuals, but are one body in the Prince; we are each parts of each other, with different

82 Twenty-Eighth Week of Ordinary Time

gifts that depend on the grace that has been given to us.”

This is the sacrifice of Christians, “the many individuals who are one body in the Prince.” This is the sacrifice which the Church celebrates in the sacrament of the altar, which is the sacrament known to the faithful; and in that sacrament it is made clear to the Church that in the sacrifice she offers, she herself is offered.

What is the gift I will take when I come into the Master’s presence? I will tell you, man, what is good and what the Master asks of you: only to act virtuously, to love goodness, and to behave humbly with your God.

Heaven and earth and all that is in them belong to the Master, your God; and now, this is what the Master, your God, demands of you: only to act virtuously, to love goodness, and to behave humbly with your God.

Prayer

Dear Master, our help and guide, please make your love the foundation of our lives, and may our love for you express itself in our eagerness to do good for others. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

This is what is said by God YHWH:
“Now I am sending my messenger
to prepare the way before me;
and suddenly, there will come to the Temple
YHWH, the one you are looking for,
and the messenger of the Treaty, whom you desire.
Yes, he is coming,” says YHWH, commander of armies.
But who will survive the day when he comes?
Who will remain standing when he appears?
Because he is like a refiner’s fire,

Malachi 3.1-24

or like fullers' lye.
He will sit down and refine and purify,
and he will purify the descendants of Levi,
and refine them like gold or silver,
so that they will be able to offer proper sacrifice to YHWH.
Then the sacrifice of Judah and Jerusalem
will please YHWH
as it did in olden times, in years gone by.
I will come near you to bring you to trial,
and I will be swift to offer evidence
against the sorcerers, adulterers, and perjurers,
those who defraud hired hands of their wages,
those who defraud widows and orphans,
those who turn foreigners away
and those with no respect for me,"
Says YHWH, commander of armies.
"It is certain that I, YHWH, do not change,
and you do not cease to be Jacob's descendants
since the days your ancestors turned aside
from my regulations, and have not kept them.
Return to me, and I will return to you,"
says YHWH, commander of armies.
"And you ask, 'How are we to return?'
Does a man dare to rob God? Yet you are robbing me!
And you say, 'How are we robbing you?'
In tithes and offerings!
You are really accursed,
because you, the whole nation, are robbing me.
Bring the whole tithe
into the storehouse
so that there will be food in my house,
and try me in this," says YHWH, commander of armies.
"Will I not open the floodgates of heaven for you,
and pour blessings down on you without limit?
For your sake, I will forbid the locusts
to destroy your crops;
and the vines in the fields will not be barren,"

84 Twenty-Eighth Week of Ordinary Time

says YHWH, commander of armies.
“Then all the nations will call you the privileged one,
because you will be a delightful land,”
says YHWH, commander of armies.
“You have defied me in the way you speak,” says YHWH,
and yet you ask, ‘What have we said against you?’
You have said, ‘It is a waste of time to serve God,
and what do we get out of keeping his command
and going around in penitential clothes
in awe of YHWH, commander of armies?’
We should admire the proud instead,
because the truth is that those who do wrong benefit from it,
and they even defy YHWH with impunity.”
Then those who respect YHWH spoke to each other
and YHWH listened carefully;
and a record book was written in his presence
of those who respect YHWH and put trust in his name.
“And they will be mine,” says YHWH, commander of armies,
“my own special possession, on the day I take action.
And I will have sympathy for them,
in the way a man has sympathy for the son who serves him.
Then you will see the distinction
between the virtuous and the vicious,
between those who serve God
and those who do not serve him.
Because now the day is coming, blazing like an oven,
when all the proud and wrongdoers will be stubble;
and the day that is coming will set them on fire,
leaving them neither root nor branch,”
says YHWH, commander of armies.
“But for those of you who respect my name, there will arise
the sun of virtue, with its healing rays;
and you will frolic like calves let out of the stall
and trample down the evil people;
they will become like ashes under the soles of your feet
on the day I take action,” says YHWH, commander of armies.
“Remember the law of my slave Moses

which I issued to him on Mount Horeb,
 the rules and regulations
 for all of Israel.
 And now I will send you
 the prophet Elijah
 before YHWH's day comes—
 that great, terrifying day—
 to turn the hearts of fathers to their children
 and the hearts of children to their fathers,
 to keep me from coming and striking
 the land with doom.

Now I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me. The
 Master you are looking for will enter his Temple; the messenger of the
 Treaty, whom you desire, will come.

You, my child, will be called the prophet of the Supreme Being,
 because you will precede the Master to prepare his way. The Master you
 are looking for will enter his Temple; the messenger of the Treaty, whom
 you desire, will come.

Second Reading *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church
 in the Modern World, by the Second Vatican Council*

The way in which the earthly and heavenly city interpenetrate each
 other can be recognized only by faith; in fact, it remains a mystery of
 human history, which is a history that is always troubled by sin until the
 glory of the sons of God is fully revealed.

As she pursues her assigned goal of bringing rescue to human beings,
 the Church not only communicates divine life to mankind, but also in
 some measure reflects the light of that life over the whole world. She
 does this especially through her work of restoring and enhancing the
 dignity of the human person, of strengthening the fabric of human
 society, and of enriching the daily activity of human beings with a deeper
 meaning and importance. The Church believes that in this way she can
 make a great contribution, through individual members and the
 community as a whole, toward bringing a greater humanity to the family
 of man and its history.

While the Church helps the world and receives a great deal herself

from the world, she has one object in view: the coming of God's Kingdom and the rescue of the whole human race. Every good that the people of God in the course of its earthly pilgrimage can confer on the family of men derives from the fact that the Church is the universal sacrament of rescue, revealing, and at the same time bringing into operation, the mystery of God's love for human beings.

The Word of God, through whom everything came into existence, was made flesh himself so that as perfect man he could save every human being and bring everything into unity. The Master is the final end of human history, the point toward which the aspirations of history and civilization are moving, the focus of the human race, the joy of all hearts and the fulfillment of their desires. He is the one whom the Father brought back from the dead, elevated into the heavens and set beside him as he assigned him to be judge over the living and the dead. In his Spirit, we have been brought to life and gathered into unity, and so make our pilgrim way toward the goal of human history, a goal in complete harmony with the loving plan of God "to make everything one in the Prince: what is in heaven and what is on earth."

The Master himself says, "Now I am coming swiftly, and I am bringing my compensation with me, to give everyone what his deeds deserve. I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."

God sent his Word and announced the good news of his peace through Prince Jesus. He is Master of everyone, and there is no rescue in anyone else.

God assigned him to be judge of the living and the dead. He is Master of everyone, and there is no rescue in anyone else.

Prayer

Dear Master, our help and guide, please make your love the foundation of our lives, and may our love for you express itself in our eagerness to do good for others. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

Twenty-Ninth Sunday In Ordinary Time

First Reading

Esther 1.1-20, 2.5-11

During the reign of Ahasuerus—the Ahasuerus who ruled over a hundred twenty-seven provinces from India to Ethiopia—while he occupied the royal throne in the stronghold of Susa, in the third year of his reign, Ahasuerus presided over a feast for all his officers and ministers: the Persian and Median aristocracy, the nobles, and the governors of the provinces.

Queen Vashti also gave a feast for the women inside the royal palace of King Ahasuerus.

On the seventh day, when the king was drunk, he instructed Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar, and Carkas, the seven eunuchs in attendance on King Ahasuerus, to bring Queen Vashti into his presence wearing a royal crown, so that he could show her beauty to the populace and the officials, because she was very lovely. But Queen Vashti refused to come at the royal order issued through the eunuchs, and at this, the king became enraged and burned with fury. He conferred with the wise men versed in the law, because the kings' business was conducted in general consultation with law-experts and jurists. He asked them "What is to be done with Queen Vashti for disobeying the order of King Ahasuerus through the eunuchs?"

In the presence of the king and the officials, Memucan answered, "Queen Vashti has not only wronged the king, she has wronged all the officials and the populace throughout the provinces of King Ahasuerus. If it please the king, an irrevocable royal decree should be issued by him and inscribed among the laws of the Persians and Medes, forbidding Vashti to come into the presence of King Ahasuerus, and authorizing the

king to give her royal dignity to one who is more deserving than she.”

There was in the stronghold of Susa a Jew named Mordecai, son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish, a Benjamite, who had been exiled from Jerusalem with the captives taken with King Jeconiah of Judah, whom King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had deported. He was foster father to his cousin Hadassah, or Esther, because she had lost both her father and her mother. The girl was beautifully formed and lovely to see. On the death of her father and mother, Mordecai had adopted her as his own daughter.

When the king’s order and decree had been obeyed, and many maidens brought together to the stronghold of Susa under the care of Hegai, Esther was also brought in to the royal palace under the care of Hegai, who was custodian of the women. The girl pleased him and won his favor, so he quickly furnished her with cosmetics and provisions. Then, picking out seven maids for her from the royal palace, he transferred both her and her maids to the best place in the harem. Esther did not reveal her nationality or family, because Mordecai had commanded her not to do so.

Esther was brought to King Ahasuerus in his palace in the tenth month, Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign. The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she won his favor and benevolence over all the virgins. So he placed the royal crown on her head and made her queen in place of Vashti.

There is no one as great as our God the Master; he is enthroned high above us, and looks down on the sky and the earth. He elevates the needy from the dirt and lifts up the poor from the trash pile.

He has scattered the proud in their arrogance and toppled powers from their thrones, and has elevated nobodies. He elevates the needy from the dirt and lifts up the poor from the trash pile.

Second Reading

A Letter to Proba by St. Augustine

Why do we, in our fear of not praying as we should, turn to so many things to find out what we should pray for? Why do we not say, in the words of the psalm, “I have asked for one thing from the Master, and this is what I will aspire to: to make my home in the Master’s house all the days of my life, to see the graciousness of the Master, and to visit his

Temple.” There the days do not come and go one after another, and the beginning of one day does not mean the end of another; all the days are one and the same, simultaneously and without end, and the life lived out in these days has itself no end.

The one who is true life taught us to pray for us to reach this life of happiness, but not with a great number of words, as though speaking longer could gain us a hearing. After all, we pray to someone who, as the Master tells us himself, knows what we need before we ask it.

Why he asks us to pray when he knows what we need before we asks might perplex us if we do not realize that our Master and God does not want to know what we want (because he cannot help knowing it), but wants us instead to exercise our desire through our prayers, so that we will be able to receive what he is preparing to give us. His gift is really very great, but our capacity is too small and limited to receive it. That is why we are told, “Enlarge your desires; do not take on the harness worn by unbelievers.”

The deeper our faith, the stronger our hope, the greater our desire, the larger will be our capacity to receive that gift which is really very great. “No eye has seen it”; it has no color. “No ear has heard it”; it has no sound. “It has not entered man’s heart”; man’s heart must enter it.

In this faith, hope, and love we always pray with unwearied desire. Still, at set times and occasions we also pray to God in words, so that by these signs we can teach ourselves and mark the progress we have made in our desire, and spur ourselves on to deepen it. The more fervent the desire, the more valuable its fruit. When the Emissary tells us, “Pray without stopping,” he means this: Never stop desiring that life of happiness which is nothing if not eternal, and ask it of the one who is the only one who can give it.

You will look for me, and when you look for me with your whole heart, you will find me. You will pray to me and I will listen to you.

I know the plans I have in mind for you, plans for your benefit and not your misfortune, plans that will give you a future full of hope. You will pray to me and I will listen to you.

Prayer

Omnipotent, eternally living God, our source of power and inspiration,

please give us strength and joy in serving you as followers of the Prince who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God through all the ages of ages. Amen.

onday

First Reading

Esther 3.1-15

King Ahasuerus raised Haman, son of Hammedatha the Agagite, to high rank, above all his fellow officials. All the king's servants who were at the royal gate would kneel and bow to Haman, because that is what the king ordered about him.

But Mordecai would not kneel and bow, and the king's slaves who were at the royal gate asked Mordecai, "Why are you disobeying the king's order?" They kept reminding him, day after day, and since he would not listen to them, they informed Haman to find out if Mordecai's explanation was acceptable, since he had told them that he was a Jew.

When Haman found out that Mordecai would not kneel and bow to him, he was filled with rage; and not only that, he thought it was not enough to lay hands only on Mordecai; since the informants had told him of Mordecai's nationality, he wanted to destroy all of Mordecai's people, the Jews, throughout the realm of Ahasuerus.

In the first month, Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, the *pur* or lot, was drawn in Haman's presence, to determine the day and month for the destruction of Mordecai's people all on a single day, and the lot fell on the thirteenth of the twelfth month, Adar.

Haman then said to King Ahasuerus, "There is a people dispersed among the nations throughout the provinces of your people, a people who live apart, with laws that differ from those of every other people. They do not obey the king's laws, and so it is not proper for the king to tolerate them. If it please the king, there should be a decree issued to destroy them, and I will deliver to the procurators ten thousand silver talents for deposit in the royal treasury."

The king took the signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy of the Jews. "You may keep the silver," the king told Haman, "but do whatever you please to this

people.”

So the royal scribes were summoned, and on the thirteenth of the first month they wrote, at the dictation of Haman, an order to the royal satraps, the governors of every province, and the officials of every people, to each province in its own writing and to each people in its own language. It was written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the royal signet ring. Letters were sent by couriers to all the royal provinces to the effect that all the Jews, young and old, including women and children, were to be killed, destroyed, and wiped out in one day, the thirteenth of the twelfth month, Adar, and that their possessions were to be seized as spoil.

A copy of the decree to be promulgated as law in every province was published to all the peoples, so that they would be prepared for that day. The couriers set out hurriedly at the king’s command; and during this time, the decree was promulgated in the stronghold of Susa. The king and Haman then sat down to a feast, while the city of Susa was thrown into confusion.

Master, ruler of all creation, the whole universe is subject to your authority and no one can oppose your will. Please free us for the sake of your love.

Please listen to our prayer and turn our sorrow into joy. Please free us for the sake of your love.

Second Reading

A Letter to Proba by St. Augustine

We should always desire the happy life that comes from Master God and always pray for it. But for this very reason, we turn our minds to the task of prayer at assigned hours, since that desire grows tepid, so to speak, from our involvement in other concerns and occupations. We remind ourselves through the words of prayer to focus our attention on the object of our desire; otherwise, the desire that began to grow tepid may become completely cold and may be totally extinguished, unless it is repeatedly stirred into flame.

And so, when the Emissary says, “Have your appeals known to God,” this should not be taken in the sense that they are in fact becoming known to God, who certainly knew them even before they were made, but they are becoming known to us before God through

submission and not before men as a boast.

And since this is so, it is not wrong or useless to pray even for a long time when there is the opportunity—I mean, when it does not keep us from performing the other good and necessary actions we are obliged to do. But even in these actions, as I said, we must always pray with that desire. To pray for a longer time is not the same as to pray by multiplying words, as some people suppose. Lengthy talk is one thing; a prayerful disposition which lasts a long time is another. In fact, it is even written in reference to the Master himself that he spent the night in prayer and that he prayed at great length. Was he not giving us an example by this? In time, he prays when it is appropriate; and in eternity, he hears our prayers with the Father.

The monks in Egypt are said to offer frequent prayers, but these are very short and hurled like swift javelins. Otherwise, their watchful attention, a very necessary quality for anyone at prayer, could be dulled and disappear through protracted delays. They also clearly demonstrate through this practice that a person must not quickly divert this kind of attention if it lasts, just as one must not allow it to be dulled if it cannot last.

Excessive talking should be kept out of prayer, but that does not mean that one should not spend a great deal of time in prayer, so long as a fervent attitude continues to accompany his prayer. To talk at great length in prayer is to perform a necessary action with an excess of words. To spend a great deal of time in prayer is to knock with a persistent and holy fervor at the door of the one we are begging from. This task is generally accomplished more by sobs than words, more through weeping than speech. He “places our tears in his sight,” and “our sobs are not hidden from him,” because he has arranged everything through his Word, and is not interested in human words.

Master, God of my rescue, I call all day for you to help. I cry out to you at night; please let my prayer come before you.

Your name and your memory are my heart’s desire; please let my prayer come before you.

Prayer

Omnipotent, eternally living God, our source of power and inspiration,

please give us strength and joy in serving you as followers of the Prince who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God through all the ages of ages. Amen.

Tuesday

First Reading

Esther 4.1-16

When Mordecai learned that the Jewish people were to be destroyed, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and ashes, and walked through the city, crying out loudly and bitterly, till he came to the royal gate, which no one dressed in sackcloth could enter. In the same way, in each of the provinces, wherever the king's legal enactment reached, the Jews went into deep mourning, with fasting, weeping, and groaning; they all slept on sackcloth and ashes.

Queen Esther's maids and eunuchs came and told her. Overwhelmed with anguish, she sent clothes for Mordecai to put on, so that he would take off his sackcloth, but he refused.

Esther then summoned Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs whom he had placed at her service, and commanded him to find out what the action of Mordecai meant and the reason for it. So Hathach went out to Mordecai in the public square in front of the royal gate, and Mordecai told him everything that had happened, as well as the exact amount of silver Haman had promised to pay to the royal treasury for the slaughter of the Jews. He also gave him a copy of the written decree for their destruction which had been promulgated in Susa, to show Esther as an explanation. He was to instruct her to go to the king, where she was to plead and intercede with him on behalf of her people.

"Remember the days of your humble condition," Mordecai had him say, "when you were brought up in my charge; because Haman, who is second to the king, has asked for our death. Call upon YHWH and speak to the king for us; save us from death."

Hathach returned to Esther and told her what Mordecai had said. Then Esther replied to Hathach and gave him this message for Mordecai: "All the servants of the king and the people of his provinces know that any man or woman who goes to the king in the inner court without being summoned suffers the automatic penalty of death, unless the king

extends to him the golden scepter, and so spares his life. In my case, I have not been summoned to the king for thirty days.”

When Esther’s words were reported to Mordecai, he had this reply brought to her: “Do not imagine that because you are in the king’s palace you alone of all the Jews will escape. Even if you remain silent now, relief and liberation will come to the Jews from another source; but you and your father’s lineage will die. Who knows but that it was for a time like this that you obtained the royal dignity?”

Esther sent back this reply to Mordecai: “Go and assemble all the Jews in Susa; and all of you fast on my behalf, without eating or drinking, day or night, for three days. My maids and I will also fast in the same way; and with this preparation, I will go to the king, contrary to the law. If I die, I die.” Mordecai went away and did exactly what Esther had commanded.

I have never trusted in anyone but you, God of Israel. Despite your anger, you will have pity and forgive all the sins of those who are in trouble.

Master, God of heaven and earth, please have pity on the humiliation of our people. Despite your anger, you will have pity and forgive all the sins of those in trouble.

Second Reading

A Letter to Proba by St. Augustine

We need to use words to remind ourselves to consider carefully what we are asking, not so that we think we can instruct the Master or win him over.

And so, when we say, “May your name be held in reverence,” we are reminding ourselves to desire that his name, which in fact is always holy, should also be considered holy among us humans. I mean that it should not be held in contempt. But this is a help for men, not God.

And as for our saying, “May your kingdom come,” it will certainly come whether we want it to or not. But we are arousing our desires for the kingdom so that it can come to us and we can be fit to reign there.

When we say, “May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” we are asking him to make us obedient, so that his will will be accomplished in us as well as it is done in heaven by his angels.

When we say, “Please give us today the bread we need for the day,”

we mean, “in this world.” Here we are asking for what is enough for us by specifying the most important part of us; that is, we are using the word “bread” to stand for everything. Either that, or we are asking for the Sacrament of the faithful, which is necessary in this world to gain the happiness that is eternal, though not for temporal happiness.

When we say, “Please forgive the debts we owe you insofar as we forgive the debts others owe us,” we are reminding ourselves of what we must ask for and what we must do to deserve to receive it.

When we say, “Do not lead us into trouble,” we are reminding ourselves to ask that his help not leave us, because otherwise we could be tempted and consent to the temptation, or despair and yield to it.

“When we say, “free us from harm,” we are reminding ourselves to reflect on the fact that we do not yet enjoy the state of bliss where we will experience no harm. This is the final request made in the Master’s prayer, and it has a wide application. In this request, Christians can utter their cries of sorrow, shed their tears, and through it they can begin, continue, and conclude their prayers, no matter what distress they find themselves in. Yes, it was very appropriate for all these truths to be entrusted to us to remember in these very words.

Whatever other words we may prefer to say—words that the one praying chooses to make his disposition clearer to himself, or that he simply adopts to intensify his disposition—we say nothing that is not contained in the Master’s prayer, provided, of course, that we are praying in a correct and proper way.

But if anyone says anything which is incompatible with this prayer from the Good News, he is praying materially, even if he is not praying sinfully. And yet I do not know how this could be termed anything but sinful, since those who are born again through the Spirit ought to pray only in the Spirit.

May the Master listen to your prayers and make peace with you; may the Master God never abandon you in times of trouble.

May he give all of you a heart to worship him and do his will; may the Master God never abandon you in times of trouble.

Prayer

Omnipotent, eternally living God, our source of power and inspiration,

please give us strength and joy in serving you as followers of the Prince who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God through all the ages of ages. Amen.

Wednesday

First Reading

Esther 14.1-19

Queen Esther, seized with mortal anguish, had recourse to YHWH. She took off her splendid clothes and put on clothes of trouble and mourning; in the place of her precious ointments, she covered her head with dirt and ashes. She punished her body severely; all her festive adornments were put aside, and her hair was completely disheveled.

Then she prayed to YHWH, the God of Israel, and said, “Dear YHWH, our King, you are the only God. Please help me, because I am alone and have no help but you, since I am taking my life in my hands.

“When I was a child, I used to hear from the people of the land of my ancestors that you, YHWH, chose Israel from among all peoples, and our ancestors from among all their ancestors, to be a lasting heritage, and that you fulfilled all your promises to them.

“But now we have sinned in your sight, and you have handed us over into the clutches of our enemies, because we worshiped their gods. You are just, YHWH.

“But now they are not satisfied with our bitter enslavement, and have undertaken to do away with the decree you have pronounced, and destroy your heritage—to close the mouths of those who praise you, and to extinguish the glory of your Temple and your altar, to open the mouths of heathen to praise their false gods, and to glorify an earthly king forever.

“Dear YHWH, do not hand over your scepter to those that are nothing. Do not let them gloat over our ruin; turn their own plots against them and make an example of our chief enemy. Please keep us in mind, YHWH; show yourself in the time of our trouble and give me courage, King of Gods and Ruler of every power. Please put in my mouth persuasive words in the presence of the lion, and turn his heart to hatred for our enemy, so that he and those who are conspiring with him will die.

“Please save us by your power, and help me, because I am alone and have no one but you, YHWH. You know everything. You know that I hate the glory of the pagans, and abhor the bed of the uncircumcised or any foreigner.

“You know that I am under compulsion, and that I abhor the sign of grandeur that rests on my head when I appear in public; I abhor it like a polluted rag, and do not wear it in private. I, your slave, have never eaten at Haman’s table, and I have not graced the king’s banquet or drunk the wine of libations. From the day I was brought here until now, your slave has had no joy except in you, YHWH, God of Abraham.

“Dear God, more powerful than everyone, please listen to the voice of those in despair. Save us from the power of evil men, and set me free of my fear.”

King of the saints, omnipotent Master, please give me courage. Put the right words into my mouth so that I will speak wisely.

Please give us some time to change heart and do not silence those who sing your praise, Master. Put the right words into my mouth so that I will speak wisely.

Second Reading

A Letter to Proba by St. Augustine

We read, for example, “May you receive glory among all the nations as you have among us,” and “May your prophets prove themselves faithful.” What does this mean but “May your name be held in reverence”?

We read, “Omnipotent Master, please touch our hearts and show us your face, and we will be saved.” What does this mean but “May your Kingdom come”?

We read, “Please direct my conduct by what you say, and let no sin rule over me.” What does this mean but “May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven”?

We read, “Please do not give me poverty or riches.” What does this mean but “Please give us today the bread we need for the day”?

We read, “Master, please remember David and all his patient suffering,” and “Master, if I have done this: if there is guilt in my hands, or if I have paid with harm harm done to me . . .” What does this mean but, “Please forgive the debts we owe you insofar as we forgive the debts

others owe us”?

We read, “Please rescue me, my God from my enemies; set me free from those who have come forward against me.” What does this mean but, “Keep us from harm”?

If you study every word of the requests made in Scripture, you will find, I think, nothing that is not contained in the Master’s prayer. So when we pray, we may use different words to say the same things, but we may not say something different.

We should not hesitate to make these prayers for ourselves, for our friends, for strangers, and even for enemies, even though the emotions in our hearts may vary with the strength or weakness of our relationships with individuals.

You now know, I think, the attitudes you should bring to prayer, as well as the requests you should make; and this is not because of what I have taught you, but because of the teaching of the one who was pleased to teach us all.

We must search out the life of happiness, we must ask for it from the Master, our God. Many, many people have discussed at great length the meaning of happiness, but surely we do not need to go to them and their long drawn-out discussions. Holy Scripture says concisely and truly, “It is a blessing to be the people whose God is the Master.” We are meant to belong to that people, and to be able to see God and live with him forever, and so “the object of this command is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and a sincere faith.”

In these three qualities, “a good conscience” stands for “hope.” Faith, hope, and love bring safely to God the people who pray—that is, those who believe, hope, and desire, and ponder what they are asking from the Master in the Master’s prayer.

Please listen to my prayer, Master, and hear my cry for help. My God, you will not scorn the cries of the poor.

Please listen carefully to my plea for help. My God, you will not scorn the cries of the poor.

Prayer

Omnipotent, eternally living God, our source of power and inspiration, please give us strength and joy in serving you as followers of the Prince

who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God through all the ages of ages. Amen.



Thursday

First Reading

Esther 5.1-5, 7.1-10

On the third day, Esther put on her royal garments and stood in the inner courtyard, looking toward the royal palace, while the king was seated on his royal throne in the audience chamber, facing the palace doorway. He saw Queen Esther standing in the courtyard and made her welcome by extending toward her the golden staff which he held. She came up to him and touched the top of his staff.

Then the king said to her, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even if it is half of my kingdom, it will be granted you."

"If it please your majesty," Esther answered, "would you come today with Haman to a banquet I have prepared?"

The king gave the order, "Have Haman be quick to fulfill the wish of Esther."

So the king and Haman went to the banquet with Queen Esther. Again, on this second day, during the drinking of the wine, the king said to Esther, "Whatever you ask, Queen Esther, will be granted you. Whatever request you make will be honored, even for half the kingdom."

Queen Esther replied, "If I have found favor with you, my king, and if I please your majesty, I ask that my life be spared, and I beg you to spare the lives of my people. You see, my people and I have been slated for destruction, slaughter, and extinction. If we were to be sold into slavery, I would remain silent; but as it is, the enemy will not be able to compensate for the harm he has done the king."

"Who and where," said King Ahasuerus to Queen Esther, "is the man who has dared to do this?"

"The enemy oppressing us," answered Esther, "is this evil Haman." At this, Haman was seized with dread of the king.

The king left the banquet in anger and went into the garden of the palace, but Haman stayed to beg Queen Esther for his life, since he saw that the king had decided on his doom. When the king returned from the garden of the palace to the banquet hall, Haman had thrown himself

100 Twenty-Ninth Week of Ordinary Time

onto the couch on which Esther was reclining; and the king exclaimed, "Will he also violate the queen while she is with me in my own house?" Scarcely had the king spoken when the face of Haman was covered over.

Harbona, one of the eunuchs who attended the king, said, "There is gibbet fifty cubits high standing at Haman's house. Haman prepared it for Mordecai, who gave the report that benefitted the king."

The king answered, "Hang him on it."

So they hanged Haman on the gibbet which he had prepared for Mordecai, and the anger of the king abated.

Israel cried out to the Master and the Master saved his people; he set them free from all harm and performed great wonders among the nations.

Announce this with shouts of joy: The Master has redeemed his slave Jacob; he set them free from all harm and performed great wonders among the nations.

Second Reading

A Letter to Proba by St. Augustine

You may still want to ask why the Emissary said, "We do not know what is right to pray for," because we certainly cannot believe that either he or those to whom he wrote did not know the Master's prayer.

He showed that he shared this uncertainty himself. Did he know what it was right to pray for when he was given a thorn in his body, an angel of Satan to slap him in the face, so that he would not become conceited by the greatness of what was revealed to him? He asked the Master three times to take it away from him, which showed that he did not know what he should ask for in prayer. At last, he heard the Master's answer, explaining why the prayer of so great a man was not granted, and why it was not beneficial for it to be granted. "My grace is enough for you, because power shines out more perfectly in weakness."

In the kind of trouble, then, which can bring either benefit or harm, we do not know what it is right to pray for; yet, because it is difficult, troublesome, and against the grain for us, since we are weak, we do what every human being would do: we pray for it to be removed from us. We owe, however, at least this much in our duty to God: if he does not remove it, we must not imagine that we have been forgotten by him, but, because of our loving endurance of harm, we must wait for greater

blessings in its place. In this way, “power shines out more perfectly in weakness.”

These words are written to prevent us from having too great an opinion of ourselves if our prayer is granted, when we are impatient in asking for something that it would be better not to receive; and to prevent us from being dejected and distrustful of God’s mercy toward us if our prayer is not granted, when we ask for something that would bring us greater trouble, or completely ruin us through the corrupting influence of prosperity. In these cases, we do not know what it is right to ask for in prayer.

And so, if something happens that we did not pray for, we must have no doubt at all that what God wants is more beneficial than what we wanted ourselves. Our great Mediator gave us an example of this. After he had said, “My Father, if it is possible, please let this cup be taken away from me,” he immediately added, “but not what I wish, but what you will, Father,” thus transforming the human will that was his through his taking a human nature. As a consequence, and properly, “through the obedience of one man, many, many men are made virtuous.”

Ask and what you ask will be given to you, because whoever asks will receive a return; whoever looks will find what he is looking for; whoever knocks will have the door opened for him.

The Master is near to everyone who calls on him in truth, because whoever asks will receive a return; whoever looks will find what he is looking for; whoever knocks will have the door opened for him.

Prayer

Omnipotent, eternally living God, our source of power and inspiration, please give us strength and joy in serving you as followers of the Prince who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

Baruch 1.14-2.5, 3.1-8

Read this scroll we are sending you aloud in YHWH’s house on the

102 Twenty-Ninth Week of Ordinary Time

feast day and during days of assembly:

“YHWH has justice on his side, and we men of Judah and citizens of Jerusalem are red with shame today, because we, along with our kings and authorities, priests and prophets, like our ancestors, have sinned in YHWH’s sight and disobeyed him. We have not listened to the voice of our God YHWH, nor have we followed the regulations YHWH imposed on us.

“From the time YHWH led our ancestors out of the land of Egypt until the present day, we have been disobedient to our God YHWH, and only too ready to disregard his voice. And the injuries and the curse which YHWH imposed on his slave Moses at the time he led our ancestors out of Egypt to give us the land flowing with milk and honey cling to us even today. Because we did not pay attention to the voice of our God YHWH, in all the utterances of the prophets he sent us; each one of us followed the promptings of our own evil hearts, served other gods, and did evil in the sight of our God YHWH.

“And YHWH fulfilled the warning he had uttered against us: against our judges who governed Israel, against our kings and authorities, and against the men of Israel and Judah. He brought down on us harm so great that there has not been done anywhere under heaven what has been done in Jerusalem, as was written in the law of Moses: that one after another of us would eat the meat off his own son or daughter. He made us subject to all the kingdoms around us, a reproach and horror among all the nations surrounding us into which YHWH has scattered us. We are brought down and not elevated, because we sinned against our God YHWH by not paying attention to his voice.

“Omnipotent YHWH, God of Israel, souls in trouble and spirits in anguish call to you. Please listen, YHWH, because you are a God of mercy, and have mercy on us, because we sinned against you; because you are enthroned forever, while we are forever dying out. Omnipotent YHWH, God of Israel, please listen to the prayer of Israel’s few, the descendants of those who sinned against you; they did not pay attention to the voice of their God YHWH, and the harm clings to us.

“Please do not remember now the misdeeds of our ancestors; remember your own hand and name, because you are our God YHWH, and we will praise you, YHWH. It was for this you put into our hearts the fear of you: for us to call on your name and praise you in our

captivity, when we have removed from our hearts the immorality of our ancestors who sinned against you. Here we are today in our captivity, where you scattered us: a censure, a curse, and retribution for all the misdeeds of our ancestors, who withdrew from our God YHWH.”

God is rich in mercy, and because he loved us so much, even though we were dead in sin, he brought us to life in the Prince.

We have sinned, been without God, and have broken all your commandments, Master, our God; even though we were dead in sin, he brought us to life in the Prince.

Second Reading

A Letter to Proba by St. Augustine

A person who asks for and tries to find this one thing from the Master makes his request with confidence and serenity. He has no fear that it will harm him when he receives it, because if this is not there, anything else he receives in the course of things brings no benefit at all. This is the one, true, and only life of happiness: that we would contemplate the Master’s graciousness forever and be immortal and incorruptible in body and spirit. It is for the sake of this one thing that everything else is wanted and asked for without impropriety. A person who has this will have all he wants; in heaven, he will not be able to want anything, because he will be unable to possess anything that is not proper.

In heaven is where the source of life is, which is what we should be thirsty for in prayer as long as we live in hope and do not yet see the object of our hope, “under the protection of” his “wings, in whose presence is all our desire,” so that we will be able to drink our fill “from the abundance of his house” and be given a drink “from the running stream of his pleasures, because the spring of life is with him, and in his illumination we will see light” when our desire will be satisfied with what is good, and there will be nothing to ask for with sobs—only what we possess with joy.

Yet, since it is that peace that goes beyond all understanding, even when we ask for it in prayer, we do not know how to pray for what is right. It is certainly true that we do not know something if we cannot think of it as it really is; whatever comes to mind we reject, repudiate, and find fault with; we know that this is not what we are looking for, even if we do not yet know what kind of thing it really is.

And so there is within us a kind of instructed ignorance: that is, one instructed by the Spirit of God, who helps our weakness. When the Emissary said, “If we hope for something we do not see, we look forward to it with patience,” he added, “in the same way the Spirit helps our weakness; we do not know what is right to pray for, but the Spirit himself takes our inarticulate groans and turns them into a plea for us. The one who searches hearts knows what the Spirit means, because he pleads for the sacred people in accordance with God’s will.”

We must not understand by this that the Holy Spirit pleads for the sacred people as if he were someone different from what God is; in the Trinity, the Spirit is the unchangeable God and one and the same as God the Father and the Son. Scripture says, “he pleads for the sacred people” because he moves the sacred people to plead, just as it says, “Your God the Master tests you, to know if you love him”—in this sense, that he does it to enable you to know.

In the same way, the Spirit moves the sacred people to plead with sobs too deep for words by inspiring in them a desire for the great and as yet unknown reality that we look forward to with patience. How can words express what we desire when it remains unknown? If we were entirely ignorant of it, we would not desire it; but by the same token, we would not desire it or look for it sobbing if we were able to see it.

We do not know how we should pray; and the Spirit will take our inarticulate cries and turn them into a plea for us.

On that day, says the Master, I will pour out a spirit of sympathy and prayer on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The Spirit will take our inarticulate cries and turn them into a plea for us.

Prayer

Omnipotent, eternally living God, our source of power and inspiration, please give us strength and joy in serving you as followers of the Prince who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God through all the ages of ages. Amen.


 SATURDAY
*First Reading**Baruch 3.9-15, 24, 4.4*

Listen, Israel, to the commandments that bring life;
 pay attention, and understand good judgment.
 How is it, Israel,
 that you are in the land of your enemies,
 grown old in a foreign country,
 defiled with the dead,
 lumped together with those destined for the world below?
 You have abandoned the source of wisdom.
 If you had walked along God's path,
 you would have lived in lasting peace.
 Learn where good judgment is,
 where to find strength, and where understanding lies,
 so that you will also know
 where a ripe old age is, and life,
 where there is light in the eyes and peace.
 Who has found the place of wisdom
 and who has entered her treasuries?
 Israel, how vast is God's house;
 how broad is the scope of his authority;
 it is vast and endless,
 high and measureless.
 In it were born the giants
 who were famous in the beginning:
 strong men, skilled in war.
 These were not the ones God chose,
 and he did not give them the path of understanding;
 they died out for lack of good judgment,
 and ceased to exist because of their stupidity.
 Who has gone up to the heavens and taken wisdom,
 or brought it down from the clouds?
 Who has crossed the sea and found it,
 and carried it away rather than fine gold?
 No one knows the way to it,

106 Twenty-Ninth Week of Ordinary Time

and no one has understood its paths.
Yet the one who knows everything knows it;
he has probed it by his knowledge;
and he is the one who set up the earth for all time
and filled it with four-footed animals.
He is the one who dismisses the light, and it goes away,
who calls it, and it comes to him trembling,
the one before whom the stars at their positions
shine and take their pleasure;
when he calls them, they answer, "Present!"
shining with joy for their Maker.
This is what our God is;
nothing else is to be compared to him;
he has traced out all the path of understanding,
and has given it to his slave Jacob,
to Israel, his beloved son.
Since then it has appeared on earth
and moved among us human beings.
It is the book of the God's rules,
the law that endures forever;
everyone who adheres to it will live,
and those who abandon it will die.
Turn back, Jacob, and accept it;
walk by its light toward splendor.
Do not give your glory to someone else,
or your privileges to an alien race.
We are so privileged, Israel,
because what pleases God is known to us!

How deep are the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God; how
unsearchable are his judgments and inscrutable his ways!

The one who knows everything knows wisdom and has given it to his
slave Jacob; how unsearchable are his judgments and inscrutable his
ways!

Second Reading

A Sermon by St. Peter Chrysologus

The holy Emissary has told us that the human race takes its origin

from two men, Adam and the Prince; two men equal in body but unequal in what they deserve, wholly alike in their physical structure but totally unlike in the very origin of their being. "The first man, Adam," he says, "became a living soul; the last Adam a life-giving spirit."

The first Adam was made by the last Adam, from whom he also received his soul, to give him life. The last Adam was formed by his own action; he did not have to wait for life to be given him by someone else; he was the only one who could give life to everyone. The first Adam was formed from worthless clay, the second Adam came out of the priceless womb of the Virgin. In the case of the first Adam, dirt was changed into flesh; in the case of the second Adam, flesh was raised up to be God.

But there is more than this. The second Adam stamped his image on the first Adam when he created him; and that is why he took on himself the role and the name of the first Adam, so that he would not lose what he had made in his own image. The first Adam, the last Adam; the first had a beginning, the last knows none. The last Adam is in fact the first one; as he himself says, "I am the first and the last."

"I am the first." That is, I have no beginning. "I am the last." That is, I have no end. "But what was spiritual," says the Emissary, "did not come first; what was living came first, and then what was spiritual." The earth comes before its produce, but the earth is not as valuable as what it produces. The earth exacts pain and labor; its produce bestows subsistence and life. The prophet was correct in boasting of this fruit, "Our earth has yielded its fruit." What is this fruit? The fruit referred to is in another place: "I will place upon your throne the one who is the fruit of your body. The first man," says the Emissary, "was made out of dirt and belongs to dirt; the second man is made from heaven and is heavenly."

"The man made from the earth is the model of those who belong to the earth; the man from heaven is the model of those who belong to heaven." How is it that these last people will belong to heaven, though they do not belong to heaven by birth? They are men who do not remain what they were by birth and persevere in being what they have become by rebirth.

The reason is, my brothers and sisters, that the heavenly spirit, by the mysterious infusion of his light, gives fertility to the womb of the virginal font. The Spirit gives birth as men belonging to heaven those whose

108 Twenty-Ninth Week of Ordinary Time

earthly ancestry brought them to birth as men belonging to the earth, and in a miserable condition; he gives them the likeness of their Creator. And now that we are reborn, refashioned in the image of our Creator, we must fulfill what the Emissary commands: "So, just as we have worn the image of the man of dirt, let us also wear the image of the man from heaven."

Now that we are reborn, as I said, in the image of our Master and have in fact been adopted by God as his children, let us put on the complete image of our Creator so as to be completely like him, not in the glory that he alone possesses, but in innocence, simplicity, gentleness, patience, humility, mercy, and harmony: those qualities in which he chose to become and to be one and the same as we are.

Because just as one man's disobedience brought condemnation on every man, one virtuous act brought every man acquittal and life.

Just as sin entered through one man, and through sin, death, one virtuous act brought every man acquittal and life.

Prayer

Omnipotent, eternally living God, our source of power and inspiration, please give us strength and joy in serving you as followers of the Prince who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God through all the ages of ages. Amen.

Thirtieth Sunday In Ordinary Time

First Reading

Wisdom 1.1-15

Love virtue, those of you who are judges on the earth;
think of YHWH in goodness
and look for him with integrity of heart;
because he is found by those who do not provoke him,
and he shows himself to those who do not disbelieve him.
You see, perverse advice separates a man from God,
and his power, when provoked, chastises the foolhardy.
Because wisdom does not enter a soul that plots evil
and does not live in a body in debt to sin;
because the holy spirit of restraint runs away from deceit
and withdraws from stupid advice;
and when vice occurs, it is reprimanded.
Because wisdom is a kindly spirit,
yet it does not acquit blasphemers' guilty lips,
since God is the witness of his inmost self
and the unerring observer of his heart,
and the listener to his tongue—
because the spirit of YHWH fills the world,
is all-embracing, and knows what man says.
And so no one who says evil things can go unnoticed,
and punishment that condemns him will not pass him by,
because evil people's stratagems will be scrutinized
and the sounds of their words will reach YHWH
for the punishment of their disobedience;
because a jealous ear listens to everything,

and cacophonous complaints are no secret to it.
 And so guard against futile grumbling,
 and hold back your tongue from slander,
 because what you say privately does not go unpunished,
 and a lying mouth kills the soul.
 Do not court death by your wandering way of life
 or draw ruin on yourselves by what your hands perform,
 because God did not make death,
 and he takes no pleasure in the ruin of living things;
 he created everything for it to have existence,
 and the creatures of the world are wholesome,
 and there are no destructive drugs among them
 or any realm of the land of the dead on earth—
 because virtue is undying.

It is a blessing for a person to find wisdom; it is more valuable than your most prized possessions. Its ways are pleasant, and all its paths lead to peace.

Wisdom that comes from God is totally pure; it is also peaceable, gentle, full of kindness, and reveals itself in good deeds. Its ways are pleasant, and all its paths lead to peace.

Second Reading A Letter to the Corinthians by St. Clement

We should fix our gaze on the Father and Creator of the whole world, and hold on to his peace and blessings: his splendid gifts that are beyond anything else. We should contemplate him in our thoughts, and reflect with our mind's eye upon the peaceful and careful unfolding of his plan; we should consider the care which he provides for the whole of his creation.

By his direction, the heavens are set into motion, and they are subject to him in peace. Day and night carry out the course he has set up without interfering with each other. The sun, moon, and choirs of stars revolve in harmony at his command in their assigned paths without deviation. By his will, the earth blossoms at the proper seasons and produces an abundant yield for men and animals and all the living things on it, without reluctance and without any violation of what he has arranged.

Regions of the abysses as yet unexplored and inexpressible realms of the depths of the ocean are subject to his laws. The mass of the limitless sea, joined by his command into a single expanse, does not overflow its prescribed limits and flows as he commanded it. That is, he said, "This is as far as you will come, and your waves are to stop here." The ocean, which is impassible for men, and the worlds beyond it, are governed by the same edicts of the Master.

The seasons, spring, summer, autumn, and winter, follow each other in harmony. The quarters from which the winds blow function at the proper season without the least deviation; and the ever-flowing springs, created for our health as well as our enjoyment, unfailingly offer their breasts to sustain human life. The tiniest of living creatures meet in harmony and peace. The great Creator and Master of the universe commanded all this to be set up in peace and harmony, in his goodness to everything, and in overflowing degree to those of us who look for refuge in his mercies, through our Master Prince Jesus; may glory and majesty be his through all the ages of ages. Amen.

My Master, you rule over the heavens and the earth; you created the seas; you are the King over the universe. Please listen to your slaves' prayers.

Master, God of heaven and earth, please have pity on the humiliation of our people. Please listen to your slaves' prayers.

Prayer

Omnipotent, eternally living God, please strengthen our faith, hope, and love, and may we do with loving hearts what you ask of us and come to share the life you promise. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

It was evil people who invited death with their hands and words;
they thought it a friend and longed for it
and made a treaty with it,

Wisdom 1.16-2.1, 10-24

because they deserve to be owned by it,
 when they said to each other, not thinking correctly,
 “Let us oppress the poverty-stricken virtuous people,
 and not spare widows
 or respect the old for their hair whitened by time;
 no, let us have our strength as our measure of virtue,
 because weakness shows that it is useless.
 So let us attack the virtuous, because they are disgusting to us;
 they stand against what we are doing,
 lecture us for breaking the law
 and charge us with violating our training.
 They claim to have knowledge of God
 and profess to be YHWH’s children.
 To us, they are a condemnation of our thoughts;
 just to look at them gives us pain,
 because their life is not like others’
 and their ways are different.
 They consider us depraved
 and keep off our paths as if they were impure.
 They think the destiny of the virtuous is a blessing
 and brag about God’s being their Father.
 Let us see whether what they say is true;
 let us find out what will happen to them,
 because if virtuous people belong to God, he will defend them
 and set them free from his enemies’ clutches.
 Let us test this with defamation and torture
 so that we will have proof of their meekness
 and verify their patience.
 Let us condemn them to a death full of shame,
 because, as they claim, God will take care of them.”
 This was what they thought; but they were wrong,
 because their immorality blinded them,
 and they did not know the hidden designs of God;
 they did not count on a payment for holiness
 or perceive innocent souls’ reward.
 Because God made man to be imperishable;
 he made him in the image of his own nature.

It was by the devil's envy that death entered the world,
and those who belong to him experience it.

Immoral people said, "Let us ambush those virtuous people, because they disapprove of our way of life and call themselves God's friends. Let us test the truth of what they say, that God will set them free from their enemies' hands if they are really his children."

He trusted God; then let God rescue him if he wants him, because he said he was God's son. Let us test the truth of what he says, that God will set him free from his enemies' hands if he is really his son.

Second Reading *A Letter to the Corinthians by St. Clement*

My dear friends, be careful that God's blessings, which are numerous, do not become the condemnation of all of us; we must live lives that are worthy of him, and do what is good and acceptable in his sight in mutual harmony. He tells us, "The Spirit of God is a lantern, searching the hidden places of our inmost being."

We must remember how near he is and that no thoughts of ours, and no conversation we hold, is hidden from him. And so it is right for us not to turn our backs and run away from God's will; we should offend stupid and foolish men, men who are swelling with conceit and proud of their bragging speech, rather than give offense to God.

We ought to respect Master Jesus, whose blood was shed for us. We should respect those in authority, and give honor to the priests. We should train the young in the fear of God, and lead our wives to everything that is good. They should show by their conduct that they are lovers of chastity, and by their gentleness reveal a pure and simple disposition; by their silence, they should reveal the control they have over their tongues, and they ought to bestow an equal love, without respect for persons, on everyone who has a holy fear of God.

Your children must share in the way of being students of the Prince. They must learn how effective humility is in God's sight, what chaste love can accomplish with God, how good and noble the fear of God is, because it brings rescue to everyone who possesses it and lives a holy life with a pure heart. The one whose Spirit is in us is the searcher of our thoughts and the designs in our hearts; and at his will, he will take that Spirit from us.

All this is strengthened by the faith that comes to us in the Prince. He addresses us himself through the Holy Spirit, and says, “Come, my children, and listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Master. Is there a man who wants life and desires having good experiences? Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking what is false. Turn away from immorality and do good; look for peace and go in pursuit of it.”

The Father is merciful in everything he does and is full of generosity; he is loving to everyone who fears him. He gives his graces in goodness and gentleness to those who approach him with undivided hearts; so we must put away all duplicity and not be distrustful in the face of his excelling and ennobling gifts.

Prayer

Omnipotent, eternally living God, please strengthen our faith, hope, and love, and may we do with loving hearts what you ask of us and come to share the life you promise. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

Virtuous people's souls are in God's hands,
and no torment will touch them.
In the view of the fools they seemed to be dead,
and their passing on was thought to be a hardship,
and their departure from us, complete annihilation.
But they are in peace.
You see, even if in fact they are punished among men,
their hope is still full of immortality;
they are chastised a little, but they will receive great blessings,
because God tested them
and found them worthy of himself.
He tried them in the way gold is tried in a furnace
and took them to himself as sacrificial offerings.
At the time of their examination, they will shine

Wisdom 3.1-19

and dart about like sparks through stubble;
they will judge nations and rule over peoples,
and YHWH will be their King forever.
Those who put their trust in him will understand the truth,
and the faithful will have their homes with him in love;
because blessings and mercy come to his holy people,
and his care is for his chosen ones.
But immoral people will have a punishment to match their thoughts,
since they neglected virtue and abandoned YHWH;
because a person who despises wisdom and instruction is doomed.
Their hope is futile, their labors are unsuccessful,
and what they do is worthless.
Their wives are fools and their children reprobates,
their brood has a curse on it.
Yes, the blessing is for the one who, childless and undefiled
did not know violation of a marriage bed;
she will have her offspring at the examination of souls.
The same for the eunuch whose hand did no wrong
and held no evil thoughts against YHWH;
he will be given loyalty's choice reward
and a more satisfying inheritance in YHWH's Temple.
Because noble struggles yield a glorious harvest,
and the root of understanding never goes barren.
But adulterers' children will remain without offspring,
and the progeny of an unlawful bed will disappear,
because even if they live long, they will not be regarded well,
and their old age will finally receive dishonor;
while if they die suddenly, they have no hope
or comfort in the day they are scrutinized,
because the end of an evil race is terrifying.

The Master tested his chosen ones as gold is tested in fire; he has accepted them as a sacrificial offering; and the time of his examination, men will see this, because blessings and mercy will be given to his chosen.

Those who put their trust in him will understand the truth, and the faithful will have their homes with him in love, because blessings and

mercy will be given to his chosen.

Second Reading A Letter to the Corinthians by St. Clement

Consider, my friends, how the Master keeps reminding us of the future return to life, which he has made Master Prince Jesus the firstfruits of by bringing him back from the dead. Let us look, my friends, at the return to life that occurs at its designated time. Day and night show us a return to life; the night lies in sleep and day comes back to life; the day goes away and night takes its place. Let us think about the harvest; how does planting occur, and in what way? The farmer goes out and throws each seed onto the ground. They are dry and bare, and fall into the earth and decay; then the greatness of the Master's foresight raises them up again from decay, and many are produced out of one, and yield its fruit.

And so our hearts should be tied fast in this hope to the one who is faithful in his promises and just in his judgments. He forbade us to tell lies; it is even less true that he will tell a lie himself. Nothing is impossible with God except to lie; and so our faith in him should be awakened, and we should reflect that everything is close to him.

By the utterance of his power, he set everything up as it is, and by his utterance he can reduce everything to annihilation. "Who can tell him, 'What have you done?' Who can stand up against the power of his authority?" He will achieve everything when he wills it and as he wills it; and nothing that he has decreed will cease to be. Everything stands in his presence, and nothing is hidden from his design, if "the heavens declare God's glory, and its dome tells the work of his hands, day speaks to day and night tells what it knows to night, but not with words or sentences or the sound of any voice."

Since everything is open to his eyes and ears, we should hold him in awe and rid ourselves of impure desires to do evil deeds, so that we will be protected by his mercy from the judgment that is coming. Can any of us escape his mighty hand? What world would give asylum to someone who deserts him? "Where will I go, where am I to hide from his face? If I go up to heaven, you are there; if I go to the edges of the earth, your right hand is there; if I lie down in the ocean bed, your spirit is there." Where, then, can you go, where can you escape to, from the presence of the one whose hands embrace the universe?

So let us approach him in holiness of soul, and raise pure and

undefiled hands to him, out of love for our good and merciful Father, who made us a chosen selection for himself.

Master, ruler of all creation, the whole universe is subject to your authority, and no one can oppose your will. Please free us for the sake of your love.

You fashioned the heavens and the earth, and every wonderful thing under heaven. Please free us for the sake of your love.

Prayer

Omnipotent, eternally living God, please strengthen our faith, hope, and love, and may we do with loving hearts what you ask of us and come to share the life you promise. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

ednesday

First Reading

Wisdom 6.1-25

And so, listen, kings, and understand;
 learn, magistrates all over the earth's expanse.
 Pay attention, those of you with power over the masses
 who act like masters of throngs of slaves.
 Authority was given to you by YHWH,
 and sovereignty by the Supreme Being,
 who will examine your deeds and scrutinize your designs.
 And because, though you were servants of his kingdom
 you did not pass correct judgments
 and did not keep the law
 or conduct yourselves as the will of God wishes,
 he will come upon you fearfully and swiftly,
 because the sentence for those in high places is severe;
 insignificant ones may be pardoned out of mercy,
 but the powerful will have a powerful test;
 because YHWH shows no partiality
 and has no fear of greatness,

since he himself made the great as well as the small,
 and he provides for all of them in the same way;
 but for those in power, a rigorous scrutiny is waiting.
 And so my words are addressed to you, princes,
 for you to learn wisdom and not sin,
 because those who keep respect for the holy rules will be found holy,
 and those well-versed in them will have an answer ready.
 And therefore, desire what I will say;
 long for it and you will learn something.
 Wisdom is resplendent and does not dim out,
 and it is easily seen by those who love it,
 and found by those who look for it.
 It hurries to make itself known, anticipating men's desire;
 and one who is waiting for it at dawn will not be disappointed,
 because he will find it sitting at his gate.
 You see, attending to it is the perfection of good judgment,
 and one who stays awake for its sake
 will soon be free from care,
 because it makes its own rounds, looking for those worthy of it,
 and affably appears to them along the streets
 and meets them with every considerateness.
 That is, the first step toward self-control
 is an overpowering desire for wisdom;
 next, care for it is love for it,
 and love means the keeping of its laws.
 And observance of its laws is the foundation of incorruptibility,
 and incorruptibility makes a man close to God—
 and so the desire for wisdom leads to a kingdom.
 Therefore, if you find pleasure in thrones and scepters,
 authorities over the peoples,
 honor wisdom, so that you will rule as kings forever.
 Now then, I will state what wisdom is and how it came to be,
 and I will hide no secrets from you,
 and from the very beginning I will search out
 and bring to light knowledge of it;
 and I will not deviate from the truth.
 And I will not admit consuming jealousy into my companionship,

because that can have no friendship with wisdom.
 A great number of wise men is the world's safety,
 and a king with good judgment, the stability of his people;
 so learn from what I say, and you will benefit by it.

I learned wisdom with a pure intention, and now I share it ungrudgingly,
 because wisdom is an unfailing treasure for every people.

A man who rejects wisdom is pathetic; God loves only a man who
 lives with wisdom, because wisdom is an unfailing treasure for every
 people.

Second Reading *A Letter to the Corinthians by St. Clement*

We should dress ourselves in unity of mind, and think humble
 thoughts as we exercise self-control and keep ourselves far from all
 defamation and slander; we should be virtuous in our actions, not simply
 our words. Scripture says, "One who says a great deal hears a great deal
 in his own turn; and does an easy talker think he is virtuous?"

And so it is our duty to be eager to do good, because everything
 comes from God. He warns us, "Now the Master is coming, and the
 payment he brings is there with him, to use to pay each one as his deeds
 deserve." He urges those of us who believe in him with our whole heart
 not to be lazy or careless in any good deed. Our pride and confidence
 must rest on him; we are to be subject to his will. We should look
 carefully at the whole army of his angels, who stand ready and serve his
 will. Scripture says, "Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him,
 and a thousand thousand served him, and cried, 'Holy! Holy! The
 Master of armies is holy! The whole of creation is full of his glory!'"

We too, dutifully gathered in unity of mind, should call to him
 constantly in unison, so as to share in his great, glorious promises. It is
 written, "No eye has seen nor ear heard, and it has not entered man's
 heart to conceive what great things have been prepared for those who
 wait for him."

My friends, how blessed and wonderful are God's gifts! Life with
 immortality, glory with virtue, truth with confidence, self-control with
 holiness—all these are gifts that fall within our understanding. Then what
 are those gifts that are in store for those who wait for him? Only the
 supremely holy Creator and Father of the ages knows their greatness and

splendor.

And so, we should make efforts with the greatest of zeal to be found among the number of those who are waiting for him, so that we will share in the promised gifts. But how will this be, my friends? It will happen if our mind is fixed on God through faith, if we are careful in looking for what is pleasing and acceptable to him, and if we fulfill what is in accordance with his blameless will and follow the path of truth, as we throw away from ourselves all that is unholy.

Master, please show me your ways; teach me to walk in your footsteps, and guide me in your truth. You are the God of my rescue, and I am waiting for you all day long.

Please look down on me, Master, and have pity on me, because I am poor and alone. You are the God of my rescue, and I am waiting for you all day long.

Prayer

Omnipotent, eternally living God, please strengthen our faith, hope, and love, and may we do with loving hearts what you ask of us and come to share the life you promise. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

Wisdom 7.15-30

Now God grant me the power to speak fittingly
 and give these characteristics their true value,
 because he is the guide of wisdom
 and the director of those who are wise.
 Yes, both we and what we say are in his hand,
 as is good judgment and knowledge of all skills,
 because he gave me healthy knowledge of what exists,
 so that I would know the organization of the universe
 and the force of its elements,
 the starting- and ending- and mid-points of times,

the changes in the sun's course and the variation of the seasons,
cycles of years, positions of stars,
natures of animals, dispositions of beasts,
powers of winds, thoughts of men,
uses of plants, and virtues of roots—
I learned what is hidden and what is obvious,
because wisdom, which fashioned everything, taught me.
Because in it there is a spirit
that is intelligent, holy, unique,
many-faceted, subtle, flexible,
clear, unspotted, certain,
not harmful, loving what is good, keen,
untrammelled, beneficent, kindly,
firm, secure, tranquil,
omnipotent, all-seeing,
and pervading every spirit,
however intelligent, pure, and tenuous it is.
Yes, wisdom is mobile beyond all motion,
and it penetrates and pervades everything because of its purity;
because it is an aura of the power of God,
and a pure emanation of the Omnipotent Glory,
and that is why nothing contaminated enters it—
since it is the radiance of eternal light,
the spotless mirror of the power of God,
and the image of his goodness.
And it, though it is one thing, can do everything,
and it renews everything while outlasting them;
and as it passes into holy souls from age to age
it produces friends of God and prophets.
Because there is nothing God loves
except someone who lives with wisdom,
because it is more beautiful than the sun
and is far beyond every constellation of the stars;
compared to light, it is greater,
because night supplants light,
but evil does not win out over wisdom.

Prince Jesus is the visible counterpart of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation, because everything was created in him.

He is the brightness of the eternal light and the image of God's goodness, because everything was created in him.

Second Reading A Discourse Against the Aryans by St. Athanasius

A stamp of wisdom has been impressed in us and in all God's deeds; and so, the true wisdom which shaped the world claims for himself everything that carries his image, and properly says, "The Master created me in his works." These words are really spoken by the wisdom that is in us, but the Master here adopts them as his own. Wisdom itself is not created, because he is the Creator; but by reason of the created image of himself found in his works, he speaks in this way, as though he were speaking of himself. Our Master said, "One who accepts you accepts me," and he could say this because the image of himself is impressed in us. In the same way, though wisdom is not to be included among created things, yet because his form and image is in his works, he speaks as if he were a creature, and says, "The Master created me in his works, when his purpose first unfolded."

The image of wisdom has been stamped upon creatures so that the world would recognize in it the Word who was its maker, and through the Word come to know the Father. This is Paul's teaching: "What can be known about God is clear to them, because God has shown it to them; ever since the creation of the world, his invisible nature has been there for the mind to perceive in things that have been made." It follows that the Word is not a creature, because the passage that begins, "The Master created me," is to be understood as referring to that wisdom which is in fact in us and is said to be so.

But if this does not persuade our opponents, have them tell us whether there is any wisdom in created things. If there is none, why does the Emissary Paul allege as the cause of man's sins, "By God's wisdom, the world failed to come to a knowledge of God through wisdom"? And if there is no created wisdom, how is it that the expression "a very great number of wise men" is found in Scripture? And again, Scripture testifies that "a wise man is careful and turns away from evil," and "by wisdom a house is built." In addition, Qoheleth says, "A wise man's wisdom will light up his face." He also reprimands presumptuous persons with the

warning, “Do not say, ‘How is it that the old days were better than these?’ because it is not in wisdom that you ask this.”

So there is a wisdom in created things, as the son of Sirach also testifies: “The Master has poured it out on all his works, to be with men as his gift, and he has fully equipped with wisdom those who love him.” The quality of being “poured out” does not belong to the essence of that self-existent Wisdom who is the only Son God ever fathered, but to that wisdom which reflects the only Son in the world. Why, then, is it beyond belief if the creative and archetypal Wisdom, whose image is the wisdom and understanding poured out in the world, would say, as though speaking directly of himself, “The Master created me in his works”? The reason is that the wisdom in this world is not creative; it is created in God’s works, and in the light of this wisdom, “the heavens declare the glory of God and its dome speaks of the work of his hands.”

In wisdom there lives a spirit that is intelligent, holy, unique, many-faceted, subtle, active, loving everything good, and irresistible. This is an omnipotent spirit that looks upon and pervades every spirit.

The Spirit penetrates the depths of everything that exists, even the depths of God. This is an omnipotent spirit that looks upon and pervades every spirit.

Prayer

Omnipotent, eternally living God, please strengthen our faith, hope, and love, and may we do with loving hearts what you ask of us and come to share the life you promise. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

Wisdom reaches from end to end in its power
and governs everything well;
I loved it and searched for it from you youth;
I looked to take it for my bride,

Wisdom 8.1-21

and fell in love with its beauty.
 It adds to nobility the radiance of companionship with God;
 even the Master of everything loved it,
 because it is a teacher in the understanding of God,
 the one who selects what he does;
 and if riches are something good to possess in life,
 what is richer than wisdom, which produces everything?
 And if good judgment provides a service,
 what in the world is a better craftsman than it?
 Or if a person loves virtue,
 the yield of its works are virtues,
 because it teaches self-control and good judgment,
 justice, and courage,
 and nothing in life is more useful for men than these things.
 Or again, if a person yearns after an abundance of learning,
 it knows what is old, and infers what is in the future;
 it understands turns of phrase and the solutions of riddles;
 it knows in advance miracles and marvels
 and the outcomes of times and ages.
 So I decided to take it to live with me,
 knowing that it would be my advisor while everything went well,
 and my comfort in care and grief.
 For its sake, I would have glory among the people
 as well as fame from the elders, though I was but a youth.
 I would become keen in judgment
 and would be a marvel before rulers;
 they would wait upon my silence and listen to my utterance,
 and as I continued speaking,
 they would place their hands on their mouths.
 For its sake, I would have immortality,
 and leave to those after me an everlasting memory;
 I would govern peoples, and nations would be my subjects—
 fearsome kings, hearing of me, would be afraid;
 at meetings, I would seem noble, and in war, courageous.
 Within my home, I would take my rest beside it,
 because association with it involves no bitterness,
 and living with it no grief,

but only joy and gladness.
 As I thought in this way within myself
 and reflected in my heart
 that there is immortality in kinship with wisdom,
 and good pleasure in friendship with it,
 and unfailing riches in what its hands produce,
 and that in frequenting its society, there is good judgment,
 and pleasant fame in sharing what it speaks of,
 I went about trying to make it my own.
 Now, I was a handsome child,
 and I came by a noble nature—
 or rather, as a noble, I achieved an uncontaminated body,
 and knowing that I could not possess it unless God gave it—
 and this too was good judgment, to know who gives the gift—
 I went to YHWH and asked it from him.

I prayed for understanding, and it was given to me; I pleaded for wisdom, and the spirit of wisdom came to me. I valued it more than all earthly power and glory.

If any one of you does not have wisdom, he has only to turn to God in prayer, and it will be given to him, because God gives generously to everyone and turns no one away. I pleaded for wisdom, and the spirit of wisdom came to me. I valued it more than all earthly power and glory.

Second Reading

A Work by Baldwin of Canterbury

“The Word of God is both living and powerful and much more piercing than a two-edged sword.” The Word of God is clearly shown in all his strength and wisdom to those who look for the Prince, who is the Word, the power, and the wisdom of God. This Word was with the Father in the beginning, and in its own time was revealed to the Emissaries, then reported by them and humbly received in faith by believers. So the Word is in the Father as well as on our lips and in our hearts.

This Word of God is living; the Father gave him life in himself, just as he has life in himself; and for this reason he is not only alive, but is life, as he says of himself, “I am the way, and I am truth and life.” Since he

is life, he is both living and life-giving, because, “in the same way as the Father brings the dead back and gives them life, the Son gives life to anyone he chooses.’ He is life-giving when he calls the dead from the grave and says, “Lazarus, come out to me!”

When this Word is reported, in the very act of reporting, it gives to its own voice which is externally heard a kind of power which is perceived inwardly to such an extent that the dead are brought back to life, and by these praises the sons of Abraham are returned from the dead. This Word, then, is alive in the heart of the Father, on the lips of the preacher, and in the hearts of those who believe and love him. Since this Word is so truly alive, it cannot be doubted that he is full of power.

He is powerful in creation, powerful in governing the universe, and powerful in the redemption of the world. In fact, what is more powerful or more effective? Who can speak of his power; who could make all its praises heard? He is powerful in what he achieves, and powerful when he is reported. He does not come back empty; he produces a harvest in everyone to whom he is sent.

He is powerful and “more piercing than any two-edged sword” when he is believed and loved. Is anything impossible for a believer? Is anything difficult for a lover? When this Word is spoken, its message pierces the heart like the sharp arrows of a strong man, like nails driven in deep; he enters so deeply that he penetrates the innermost cavity. This word is much more piercing than any two-edged sword, in that he is stronger than any courage or power, sharper than any shrewdness of human ingenuity, and keener than all human wisdom, or the subtlety of learned reasoning.

The source of wisdom is God’s utterance from above; its ways are the eternal commandments.

The fear of the Master is the beginning of wisdom; its ways are the eternal commandments.

Prayer

Omnipotent, eternally living God, please strengthen our faith, hope, and love, and may we do with loving hearts what you ask of us and come to share the life you promise. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy

Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

SATURDAY

First Reading

Wisdom 11.20-12.2, 11-19

You have arranged everything
 by length, number, and weight, YHWH;
 because great strength has its home in you always;
 can anyone resist the power of your arm?
 In fact, before you, the whole universe is a grain in the scale,
 a drop of morning dew that falls on the earth.
 But you have mercy on everyone, because you can do everything;
 and you overlook men's sins so that they can change heart.
 Yes, you love everything that exists,
 and loathe nothing that you have made;
 because you would not have fashioned what you hated.
 And how could something last, unless you willed it,
 or be preserved if it had not been called into being by you?
 But you spare everything, because it is yours,
 YHWH, master of souls,
 because your imperishable spirit is in everything.
 And so you reprimand offenders little by little;
 you warn them, and remind them of the sins they are doing,
 so that they will abandon their evil and believe in you, YHWH.
 And it was not out of fear of anyone
 that you granted amnesty for their sins;
 because who can tell you, 'What have you done?'
 Or who can oppose your decree?
 Or when peoples die out, who can challenge you, who made them,
 or who can enter your presence to exonerate dishonest men?
 Because there is neither any god besides you that cares for everyone,
 so that you need show you have not passed an unjust sentence,
 nor can any king or authority confront you
 on behalf of those you punished.
 But since you are just, you govern everything justly;

you regard it as unworthy of your power
 to punish anyone who has incurred no blame;
 because your power is the source of justice,
 and your mastery over everything makes you lenient to everyone.
 Yes, you show your might
 when the completeness of your power is disbelieved,
 and you reprimand rashness in those who know you.
 But though you are master of might, you judge with forbearance
 and you govern us with a great deal of lenience;
 because power, whenever you choose, is there beside you.
 And you taught your people, by these actions,
 that the virtuous must be kind;
 and you give your sons good ground for hope
 that you would permit repentance for their sins.

Master, you show mercy to everyone, and you despise nothing you
 created; you overlook men's sins so that they will change heart and you
 will spare them, because you are the Master, our God.

Please look down on us with pity, and may the light of your mercy
 shine upon us, because you are the Master, our God.

Second Reading

*A Dialogue on Divine Providence
by St. Catherine of Siena*

With a look of mercy that revealed his indescribable kindness, God
 the Father spoke to Catherine:

My beloved daughter, everything I give to mankind comes from the
 love and care I have for them. I desire to show my mercy to the whole
 world, and my protective love to all those who want it.

But in their ignorance, people treat themselves very cruelly. My care
 is constant, but they turn my life-giving gifts into a source of death. Yes,
 I created them with loving care and formed them in my image and
 likeness; I pondered, and was affected by the beauty of my creation.

I gave humans a memory to recall my goodness, because I wanted
 them to share in my own power; I gave them an intellect to know and
 understand my will through the wisdom of my Son, because I am the
 giver of every good gift, and I love them with a father's constant love.
 Through the Holy Spirit, I gave them a will to love what they would

come to know with their intellects.

In my loving care I did all this, so that they could know me and perceive my goodness and be happy to see me forever; but as I have told in other places, heaven had been closed off because of Adam's disobedience. Immediately after his sin, all sorts of evil made its advance throughout the world.

So that I would commute the sentence of death consequent upon this disobedience, I attended to you with loving care—out of provident concern, I handed over the only Son I ever fathered to make satisfaction for your needs. I demanded supreme obedience from him so that the human race would be freed of the poison which had infected the entire earth because of Adam's disobedience. With eager love, he submitted to a shameful death on the cross, and by that death he gave you life, and not merely human but divine life.

Please keep us, Master, as carefully as the pupil in your eye; gather us under the shade of your wings.

Please show us your wonderful love, Savior of everyone who looks to you for refuge; gather us under the shade of your wings.

Prayer

Omnipotent, eternally living God, please strengthen our faith, hope, and love, and may we do with loving hearts what you ask of us and come to share the life you promise. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

THIRTY-FIRST SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

First Reading

1 Maccabees 1.1-24

After Philip's Son Alexander the Macedonian, who came from the land of Kittim, had defeated the King of Persia and the Medes, Darius, he became king in his place, after he had first ruled in Greece. He fought a great number of campaigns, captured forts, and put kings to death; he advanced to the ends of the earth and collected plunder from a great number of nations.

The earth became silent in his presence, and his heart grew proud and arrogant. He gathered a very strong army and conquered provinces, nations, and their authorities, and they became his subjects. But after all this, he took to his bed, realizing that he was going to die; and so he summoned his officers and the nobles who had been brought up with him from his youth, to divide his kingdom among them while he was still alive. Alexander had reigned twelve years before he died.

And so his officers took over his kingdom, each in his own territory, and after his death they all put on royal crowns, and so did their sons after them for many years, causing a good deal of hardship on the earth.

From these sons, there sprang a sinful sprout, Antiochus Epiphanes, son of King Antiochus, who had once been a hostage at Rome. He became king in the year 137 in the Greek calendar.

In those days, there appeared a number of people in Israel who were in violation of the law, and they corrupted many people by saying, "Let us go and make an alliance with the Gentiles all around us; since we separated from them, a good deal of harm has come to us." And their proposal found acceptance; some from among the people went straight to the king, and he authorized them to introduce the way of living of the

Gentiles; and at this, they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem like those the Gentiles used. They covered the mark of their circumcision and abandoned the sacred Treaty; they allied themselves with the Gentiles and sold themselves to corruption.

When his kingdom seemed secure, Antiochus set out to become king of Egypt, so that he could have control over both kingdoms. He invaded Egypt with a powerful force of chariots and elephants and a large fleet, and declared war on Ptolemy, the king of Egypt. Ptolemy was unnerved at his presence and fled, leaving many casualties; the fortified cities in Egypt were captured, and Antiochus looted the land of Egypt.

After Antiochus' defeat of Egypt in 143, he advanced on Israel and Jerusalem with a strong force, and insolently invaded the sanctuary and removed the golden altar, the lampstand for the light, with all its fixtures, the offering table, the cups and bowls, the golden censers, the curtain, the crowns, and the golden ornament on the facade of the Temple. He stripped everything, and took away the gold and silver and the valuable utensils, as well as all the treasure he could find, and after he had taken all of it, and spoken with great arrogance and shed a great deal of blood, he returned to his own country.

If our God is angry with us for a short while to punish us and correct us, he will be at peace again with his slaves.

All correction seems harsh at the time it is administered, but afterward, it yields the peaceful harvest of an honest life; he will be at peace again with his slaves.

Second Reading *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church
in the Modern World by the Second Vatican Council*

Peace is not the mere absence of war or the simple maintenance of a balance of power between forces, nor can it be imposed at the dictate of absolute power. It is properly and fittingly called "a work of justice." It is the product of order, the order implanted in human society by its divine founder, to be realized in practice as men hunger and thirst for ever more perfect justice.

The common good of the human race is subject to the eternal law as its primary principle, but its requirements in practice keep changing with the passage of time. The result is that peace is never established finally

and forever; the building up of peace has to go on all the time. Again, the human will is weak and wounded by sin; the search for peace therefore demands from each individual constant control of the emotions, and from legitimate authority untiring vigilance.

Even this is not enough. Peace here on earth cannot be maintained unless the good of the human person is safeguarded, and men are willing to trust each other and share their riches of spirit and talent. If peace is to be established, it is absolutely necessary to have a firm determination to respect other persons and peoples and their dignity, and to be zealous in the practice of brotherhood.

Peace is therefore also the result of love; love goes beyond what justice can achieve. Peace on earth, born of love for one's neighbor, is the sign and effect of the peace of the Prince that flows from God the Father. In his own person, the incarnate Son, the Prince of Peace, brought everyone into harmony with God through his death on the cross. In his human nature, he destroyed hatred and restored unity to all mankind in one people and one body. And as he was lifted up above by the return to life, he sent the Spirit of love into human hearts.

All Christians are thus urgently summoned to "live the truth in love," and to join all true peacemakers in prayer and work for peace. And since we are moved by the same Spirit, we can only praise those who renounce violence in defense of rights, and have recourse to means of defense otherwise available to the less powerful as well, provided that this can be done without injury to the rights and obligations of others of the community.

Grandeur and power belong to you, Master; you are raised up to be ruler over everyone; please bring us peace, Master, in our time.

Dear God, Creator of everything, you are awesome and powerful, just and merciful; please bring us peace, Master, in our time.

Prayer

Dear God of power and mercy, since we can offer you the appropriate service and praise only with your help, may we please live the faith we profess and trust your promise of eternal life. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning

with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages.
Amen.



Monday

First Reading

1 Maccabees 1.43-63

King Antiochus wrote to his whole kingdom that everyone was to be one people, with each abandoning his own particular customs. All the Gentiles conformed to the command of the king, and many of the Israelites were in favor of his religion, and sacrificed to idols and profaned the Sabbath.

The king sent messengers with letters to Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, ordering them to follow customs foreign to their country: to forbid holocausts, sacrifices, and libations in the sanctuary, to profane the Sabbaths and feast days, to desecrate the sanctuary and the sacred ministers, to build pagan altars, temples, and shrines, to sacrifice pigs and unclean animals, and to let themselves be defiled with every kind of impurity and outrage, so that they would forget the Law and change all their observances. Whoever refused to act in accordance with the command of the king was to be put to death.

These were the orders published throughout his kingdom. He appointed inspectors over all the people, and ordered the cities of Judah to offer sacrifices, taking turns with each city.

Many of the people, who had abandoned the Law, joined them and committed evil in the land. Israel was driven into hiding, wherever places of refuge could be found. On the fifteenth of Chislev, in 145, the king erected the horrible abomination on the altar of holocausts, and in the surrounding cities of Judah, they built pagan altars. They also burnt incense at the doors of houses and in the streets. Any scrolls of the Law which they found they tore up and burnt; whoever was found with a scroll of the Treaty and whoever observed the Law was condemned to death by royal decree.

In this way, they used their power against those of Israel who were caught each month in the cities. On the twenty-fifth of each month, they made a sacrifice on the altar erected over the altar of holocausts. Women who had their children circumcised were put to death, in keeping with

the decree, with the babies hung from their necks; and their families too, and those who had circumcised them, were killed.

But many in Israel were determined, and resolved in their hearts not to eat anything unclean, and preferred to die rather than be defiled with unclean food or profane the holy Treaty; and they did die. There was terrible hardship upon Israel.

Please open your eyes and see our plight; the nations have surrounded us to punish us. Reach out your arm to us and save us.

Please look on their threats and help your slaves report what you have said with complete boldness. Reach out your arm to us and save us.

Second Reading *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church
in the Modern World by the Second Vatican Council*

Men must not be content simply to support the efforts of others in the work for peace; they must also scrutinize their own attitudes. Statesmen, who are responsible for the common good of their own nation and at the same time for the well-being of the whole world, are very much dependent on the opinions and convictions of the general public. Their efforts to secure peace are useless as long as people are divided or set against each other by feelings of hostility, contempt, and distrust, by racial hatred or inflexible ideologies. There is, then, a very great, urgent need to reeducate people and provide fresh inspiration in the field of public opinion.

Those engaged in education, especially of young people, and those who influence public opinion, should consider it a very serious responsibility to work for the reeducation of mankind to a new attitude toward peace. We must all undergo a change of heart. We must look out on the whole world and see the tasks that we can all do together to promote the well-being of the family of man. We must not be misled by a false sense of hope. Unless antagonism and hatred are abandoned, unless binding and honest agreements are concluded, safeguarding universal peace in the future, mankind, already in grave peril, may well face, in spite of its marvelous advance in knowledge, that day of disaster when it knows no other peace than the terrifying peace of death.

In saying this, however, the Prince's Church, since it lives in the midst of these anxious times, continues unwaveringly in hope. Time and

again, at the proper season and out of it, it tries to report to our age the message of the Emissary: "Now is the moment of God's favor," the moment for a change of heart, "now is the day of rescue."

To build peace, the causes of human discord which feed the fires of war must first be eliminated, and among these are especially the violations of justice. Many of these causes are due to gross economic inequality and delay in providing necessary remedies. Others arise from a spirit of domination and a contempt for others, and, among more fundamental causes, from human envy, distrust, pride, and other forms of selfishness. Since human beings cannot bear so many violations of proper order, the result is that, even where war does not rage, the world is constantly plagued by human conflict and acts of violence.

The same evils are also found in relations between nations. It is therefore absolutely necessary that international institutions should cooperate more effectively, more resolutely, and with greater coordination of effort, in order to overcome or prevent these evils, and to check unrestrained acts of violence. There must also be constant encouragement for the creation of organizations designed to promote peace.

I have put in your heart an understanding of wisdom, says the Master; I have heard your prayer, and I will defend this city, so that there will be peace in your time.

Turn from evil and do good; look for peace and pursue it, so that there will be peace in your time.

Prayer

Dear God of power and mercy, since we can offer you the appropriate service and praise only with your help, may we please live the faith we profess and trust your promise of eternal life. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

*First Reading**1 Maccabees 2.1, 15-28, 42-50, 65-70*

In those days, Mattathias, son of John, son of Simeon, a priest of the family of Joarib, left Jerusalem and settled in Modein.

The officers of the king in charge of enforcing the apostasy came to Modein to organize the sacrifices, and many of Israel joined them; but Mattathias and his sons gathered in a group apart. Then the officers of the king addressed Mattathias in this way: “You are a leader, an honorable, great man in this city, surrounded by sons and relatives. Come now and be the first to obey the king’s command, as all the Gentiles and men of Judah and those left in Jerusalem have done. Then you and your sons will be included among the king’s friends, and will be made rich with silver and gold and a great number of gifts.”

Mattathias, however, answered loudly, “Even if all the Gentiles in the king’s realm obey him, and each of them abandons the religion of his ancestors and consents to the king’s orders, my sons, my relatives, and I will keep the Treaty made to our ancestors. God forbid that we would abandon the Law and the commandments. We will not obey what the king says or stray from our religion in the slightest degree.”

As he finished saying this, a Jew came forward in the sight of everyone to offer sacrifice on the altar in Modein in accordance with the king’s order. When Mattathias saw him, he was filled with zeal; his heart was stirred and his just rage aroused; he sprang forward and killed him on the altar. At the same time, he also killed the king’s messenger who was forcing them to sacrifice, and tore down the altar. In this way, he showed his zeal for the law, just as Phinehas did with Zimri son of Salu.

Then Mattathias went through the city shouting, “Have everyone who is zealous for the law and who stands by the Treaty follow me!” At this, he fled to the mountains with his sons, leaving behind in the city all their possessions.

They were then joined by a group of Hasideans, valiant Israelites, all devout followers of the Law. And all those who were escaping from the disaster joined and supported them. They mustered an army and struck down sinners in their anger and law-breakers in their rage, and the survivors fled to the Gentiles for safety.

Mattathias and his friends went about and tore down the pagan altars; they also forced circumcision upon any uncircumcised boys they found in the territory of Israel. They routed the arrogant, and the work went successfully at their hands; they saved the Law from the hands of the Gentiles and kings, and did not let sinners triumph.

When the time came for Mattathias to die, he said to his sons, “Arrogance and scorn have now grown strong; it is a time of disaster and violent anger. And so, my sons, be zealous for the Law and give your lives for the Treaty of your ancestors.

“Here is your brother Simeon, who I know is a wise man; listen to him always, and he will be a father to you. And Judas Maccabeus, a warrior from his youth, will be the leader of your army and direct the war against the nations. You are also to gather about you all those who observe the Law, and you must avenge the wrongs of your people. Pay back to the Gentiles what they deserve, and observe the regulations of the Law.

Then he blessed them and was united with his ancestors. He died in 146, and was buried in the tomb of his ancestors in Modein, and all of Israel mourned him heavily.

Remember what our ancestors did in their own times, and you will win great honor and everlasting fame.

My children, be courageous and strong in your obedience to the Law, because you will be glorified by it, and you will win great honor and everlasting fame.

Second Reading *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church
in the Modern World by the Second Vatican Council*

Christians should cooperate, willingly and wholeheartedly, in building an international order based on genuine respect for legitimate freedom and on a brotherhood of universal friendship. This is all the more urgent because the greater part of the world still experiences such poverty that in the voices of the poor, the Prince himself can be heard, crying out for charity from his followers. There are nations—many of them with a majority of Christians—which enjoy an abundance of goods, while others are deprived of the necessities of life, and suffer from hunger, disease, and all kinds of hardships. This scandal must be

removed from among men, because the glory of the Prince's Church and its testimony to the world are the spirit of poverty and the spirit of love.

Christians, especially young Christians, deserve praise and support when they offer themselves voluntarily in the service of other people and nations. Actually, it is the duty of all God's people, with bishops taking the lead by word and example, to do everything in their power to relieve the sufferings of our times, following the age-old custom of the Church in giving not only what they can spare but even what they need for themselves.

Without being uniform or inflexible, a method of collecting and distributing contributions should be established in each diocese and nation and on a world-wide scale. Wherever it seems appropriate, there should be joint action between Catholics and other Christians. The spirit of charity, far from forbidding good judgment and orderliness in social and charitable action, in fact demands them. Those intending to serve the developing countries must therefore undergo appropriate and systematic training.

In order to foster and encourage cooperation among men, the Church must be present and active in the community of nations. It must work through its own public organizations with the full and sincere cooperation of all Christians in their one desire to serve all mankind.

This end will be more effectively achieved if the faithful are themselves conscious of their human and Christian responsibilities, and try to awaken among those in their own walk of life a readiness to cooperate with the international community. Special care should be taken to give this kind of formation to young people in their religious and secular education.

Finally, it is to be hoped that, in carrying out their responsibilities to the international community, Catholics will try to cooperate actively and constructively with other Christians, who profess the same Good News of love; and with every man who hungers and thirsts for true peace.

Now I am coming from the south; I, the Master, your God, will visit you in peace.

I will look upon you with favor; I will make you fertile and numerous to fulfill the Treaty I made with you; I, the Master, your God, will visit you in peace.

Prayer

Dear God of power and mercy, since we can offer you the appropriate service and praise only with your help, may we please live the faith we profess and trust your promise of eternal life. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

 Wednesday

First Reading

1 Maccabees 3.1-26

Mattathias' son Judas, who was called Maccabeus, took his place; all his relatives and everyone who had joined his father supported him, and they carried on Israel's war joyfully.

He spread abroad the glory of his people,
and put on his breastplate like a giant.

He armed himself with weapons of war;
he planned battles and protected the camp with his sword.

In his actions, he was like a lion,
like a lion cub roaring for prey;
he went after evil people and hunted them down,
and destroyed in fire those who were tormenting his people.

Those who violated the law were cowed by their fear of him,
and everyone who did wrong was unnerved.

By his hand, redemption was fortunately won,
and he gave trouble to a great many kings;
he made Jacob glad by what he did,
and his memory is blessed forever.

He went about the cities of Judah
destroying the sacrilegious people there;
he turned God's fury away from Israel
and was renowned to the ends of the earth;
he gathered together all those who were dying out.

Then Apollonius mustered the Gentiles, together with a large army from Samaria, to fight against Israel. When Judas learned of it, he went out to meet him and defeated and killed him. A great many fell wound-

ed, and the rest fled; their possessions were confiscated and the sword of Apollonius was taken by Judas, who fought with it for the rest of his life.

But Seron, commander of the Syrian army, heard that Judas had collected a great number around him, a force of many men trained for war; so he said, "I will make a name for myself and win glory in the kingdom by defeating Judas and his followers, who have despised the king's command." And again a large company of renegades advanced with him to take revenge on the Israelites.

When he reached the ascent of Beth-horon, Judas went out to meet him with a few men; but when they saw the army coming against them, they said to Judas, "How can the small number of us fight a powerful army like this? Besides, we are weak from fasting."

Judas answered, "It is easy for many men to be conquered by a few; in the sight of heaven there is no difference between deliverance by many or few, because victory in war does not depend on the size of the army; it depends on the strength that comes from heaven. They have come against us unlawfully and with a great deal of presumption to destroy us and our wives and children, and to loot us; but we are fighting for our lives and our laws. God will crush them before us himself; so do not be afraid of them."

When he finished speaking, he made a sudden rush upon Seron and his army, who were crushed before him. He pursued Seron down the descent of Beth-horon into the plain; about eight hundred of their men fell, and the rest fled into the country of the Philistines. Then Judas and his brothers began to be feared, and dread fell on the Gentiles about them; his fame reached the king, and all the Gentiles talked about the battles of Judas.

They come against us unlawfully and with a great deal of arrogance. Do not be afraid of them, because victory in war does not depend on the size of the army; it depends on the strength that comes from heaven.

We are fighting for our lives and our laws; the Master will crush our enemies before our eyes, because victory in war does not depend on the size of the army; it depends on the strength that comes from heaven.

Second Reading *A Catechetical Instruction by St. Cyril of Jerusalem*

The single word "faith" can have two meanings. One kind of faith

concerns what is taught; it involves the soul's assent to and acceptance of some particular matter. "Faith" in this sense also deals with the soul's good, as we see from the words the Master said: "Whoever listens to my voice and believes in the one who sent me has eternal life, and will not come to condemnation." And again, "One who believes in the Son is not condemned; he has passed from death to life."

How great God's love for men is! Some good men have been found pleasing to God because of years of work; but what they achieved by working for many hours at a task pleasing to God is freely given to you by Jesus in one short hour. Because if you believe that Prince Jesus is Master, and that God brought him back to life from death, you will be saved and taken up to paradise by him, just as he brought the thief there.

Do not doubt that this is possible; after all, he saved the thief on the holy hill of Golgotha because of one moment's faith; will he not save you too, since you have believed?

The other kind of faith is given by the Prince by means of a special grace. "To one person, wise sayings are given through the Spirit; to another, perceptive comments by the same Spirit; to another, faith by the same Spirit; to another, gifts of healing." Now this kind of faith, given by the Spirit as a special favor, is not confined to matters of teaching, because it produces effects beyond any human capability. If a man who has this faith says to this mountain, "Move from here to there, it will move." That is, when anybody says this in faith, believing it will happen and having no doubt in his heart, he then receives that grace.

It is in addition about this kind of faith that it is said, "If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed." The mustard seed is small in size, but it holds an explosive force; although it is planted into a small hole, it produces huge branches, and when it is grown, birds can nest there. In the same way, faith produces great effects in the soul instantaneously. When it is illuminated by faith, the soul pictures God, and sees him as clearly as any soul can. It circles the earth; even before the end of this world, it sees the judgment and the conferring of promised rewards.

So I hope you have the faith which depends on you and is directed toward God, so that you will also be able to receive from him that faith which transcends man's capacity.

We know that no one becomes virtuous by obedience to the Law; he

becomes that way by belief in Prince Jesus; and we have put our faith in Prince Jesus so that we will become virtuous by faith in him.

By the sacrifice of his life, God chose him as the means of atonement for everyone who believes; and we have put our faith in Prince Jesus so that we will become virtuous by faith in him.

Prayer

Dear God of power and mercy, since we can offer you the appropriate service and praise only with your help, may we please live the faith we profess and trust your promise of eternal life. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

1 Maccabees 4.36-59

Judas and his relatives said, “Now that our enemies have been crushed, we should go up to purify the sanctuary and rededicate it.” So the whole army assembled and went up to Mound Zion. They found the sanctuary deserted, the altar desecrated, the gates burned, weeds growing in the courts as if they were in a forest or on some mountain, and the priests’ chambers demolished. They then tore their clothes and set up a huge wailing; they sprinkled ashes on their heads and fell to their faces on the ground; and when a signal was given with trumpets, they cried out to heaven.

Judas then appointed men to attack those in the citadel, while he purified the sanctuary; he chose blameless priests, devoted to the Law, and these people purified the sanctuary and carried away the stones of the “loathsome thing” to an unclean place.

They deliberated what ought to be done with the altar of holocausts that had been desecrated; and the serendipitous thought occurred to them to tear it down, to keep it from being a lasting shame to them that the Gentiles had defiled it; so they tore down the altar. They stored the stones in a suitable place on the Temple hill, until a prophet would come

and decide what to do with them.

They then took uncut stones, as the Law prescribed, and built a new altar like the former one; they also repaired the sanctuary and the interior of the Temple, and purified the courts. They made new sacred utensils, and brought the lampstand, the altar of incense, and the table into the Temple. Then they burned incense on the altar, and lighted the lamps on the lampstand, and these illuminated the Temple. They also put loaves on the table, and hung up the curtains; and in this way, they finished all the work they had undertaken.

Early in the morning on the twenty-fifth of the ninth month, Chislev, 148, they rose and offered sacrifice as the Law prescribed on the new altar of holocausts they had made. It was on the anniversary of the day the Gentiles had defiled it; on that very day, that it was reconsecrated with songs, harps, flutes, and cymbals. All the people prostrated themselves and worshiped and praised heaven who had given them success.

For eight days, they celebrated the dedication of the altar and joyfully offered holocausts and sacrifices of rescue and praise. They ornamented the facade of the Temple with gold crowns and shields; they repaired the gates and the priests' chambers and furnished them with doors. There was great happiness among the people now that the disgrace of the Gentiles had been removed.

Judas and his relatives and the entire congregation of Israel then decreed that the days of the dedication of the altar were to be observed with joy and gaiety every year for eight days, from the twenty-fifth of Chislev.

They decorated the facade of the Temple with golden crowns and dedicated the Master's altar, and there was great joy among the people.

They blessed the Master with hymns and expressions of gratitude, and there was great joy among the people.

Second Reading A Catechetical Instruction by St. Cyril of Jerusalem

In learning and professing the faith, you must accept and keep only the Church's present tradition, which is confirmed by the Scriptures. Although not everyone is able to read the Scriptures, some because they have never learned to read, and others because their daily activities keep

them from this study, still, so that their souls will not be lost through ignorance, we have gathered the whole of the faith into a few concise articles.

I now order you to keep this creed for your nourishment throughout life, and ever to accept any alternative, not even if I were myself to change and say something contrary to what I am now teaching, and not even if some angel of contradiction transformed himself into an angel of light to try to lead you astray. Because “even if we—if an angel from heaven!—were to report good news that is contrary to what you have now received, throw him out!”

So for the present be content to listen to the simple words of the creed and memorize them; at some suitable time you can find the proof of each article in the Scriptures. This summary of the faith was not composed at man’s whim; the most important sections were chosen from the whole Scripture to constitute and complete a comprehensive statement of the faith. Just as a mustard seed contains many branches in a small grain, this brief statement of the faith keeps in its heart, so to speak, all the religious truth to be found in the Old and New Testaments alike. That is why, my brothers and sisters, you must consider and preserve the traditions that you are now receiving. Engrave them across your heart.

Observe them scrupulously, so that no enemy will rob any of you in an idle and thoughtless moment; no heretic must deprive you of what has been given to you. Faith is rather like depositing in a bank the money entrusted to you, and God will surely demand an accounting of what you have deposited. In the words of the Emissary, “I command you before the God who gives life to everything, and before the Prince who offered his testimony under Pontius Pilate in a splendid declaration” to keep this faith you have received unblemished, until the coming of our Master Prince Jesus.

You have been given life’s greatest treasure, and when he comes, the Master will ask for what he has entrusted you with. “At the designated time, he will reveal himself, because he is the blessed, only Ruler, the King of all kings, the Master of all masters. He alone is immortal, and lives in unapproachable light. No human being has ever seen or can see him.” May glory and honor and power come to him through all the ages of ages. Amen.

An honest man will live by faith; but if he draws back, I will take no pleasure in him. We are not people who draw back and are lost; we live by faith, so that we will be saved.

An unbeliever has no integrity. We are not people who draw back and are lost; we live by faith, so that we will be saved.

Prayer

Dear God of power and mercy, since we can offer you the appropriate service and praise only with your help, may we please live the faith we profess and trust your promise of eternal life. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

2 Maccabees 12. 32-46

After the feast of Pentecost, Judas and his followers lost no time in marching against Gorgias, the governor of Idumea, who opposed them with three thousand infantry and four hundred cavalry. In the ensuing battle, a few of the Judeans were killed.

A man called Dositheus, a powerful horseman and one of Bacenor's men, caught hold of Gorgias by his military cloak and dragged him along by main force, intending to capture the miserable scoundrel alive, when a Thracian horseman attacked Dositheus and cut off his arm at the shoulder. Then Gorgias fled to Marisa. After Esdris and his men had been fighting for a long time and were tired, Judas called upon YHWH to show himself their ally and leader in the battle. Then, raising a battle cry in his ancestral language, and with songs, he charged Gorgias' men when they were unprepared and routed them.

Judas rallied his army and went to the city of Adullam. As the week was ending, the men purified themselves in accordance with the custom and kept the Sabbath there. On the following day, since the task had now become urgent, Judas and his men went to gather the bodies of those killed and bury them with their relatives in their ancestral tombs. But under the tunic of each of the dead, they found amulets sacred to

the idols of Jamnia, which the Law forbids Judeans to wear; so it was clear to everyone why these men had been killed.

And so they all praised the ways of YHWH, the just judge who brings to light what is hidden; and turning to prayer, they begged to have the sinful deed completely erased. Noble Judas warned the soldiers to keep themselves free from sin, because they had seen with their own eyes what had happened because of the sin of those who had fallen. He then took up a collection among all his soldiers, amounting to two thousand silver drachmas, which he sent to Jerusalem to provide for a sacrifice of atonement.

In doing this he acted in an excellent and very noble way, since he had the return to life of the dead in view; because if he were not expecting the fallen to come back to life, it would have been useless and foolish to pray for them in death. But if he did this with a view to the splendid reward that waits for those who had gone to rest in goodness, it was a holy and pious thought; and in this way, he made atonement for the dead to free them from this sin.

There are some who have died a godly death; they will receive the splendid reward which is waiting for them.

It is a holy and pious thought to make atonement for the dead, so that they will be freed from their sins; they will receive the splendid reward which is waiting for them.

Second Reading

A Sermon by St. Gregory Nazianzen

“What is a human being, for you to notice him?” What is this new mystery surrounding me? I am both small and great, low and elevated, mortal and immortal, earthly and heavenly. I am to be buried with the Prince and to come back to life with him, to become a coheir with him, a son of God, and in fact, God himself!

This is what the great mystery means for us; this is why God became a human being and became poor for our sake; it was to elevate our matter, to recover the divine image, and to re-create mankind, so that all of us would become one and the same in the Prince, who became completely in us everything that he is himself. So we are no longer to be “male and female, barbarian and Scythian, slave and free”—distinctions deriving from matter—but are to carry within ourselves only the seal of

God, by whom and for whom we were created. We are to be so formed and molded by him that we are recognized as belonging to one family.

If we could only be what we hope to be, by the great kindness of our generous God! He asks so little, and gives so much, in this life and the next, to those who love him sincerely. In a spirit of hope, and out of love for him, we should then “bear and endure everything” and show our gratitude for everything that happens to us, since even reason can often recognize what happens as weapons to win our rescue. And meanwhile, we should entrust to God our own souls and the souls of those who have reached the place of rest before us, since they are more ready for it, although they walked the same road as we.

Master and Creator of everything, and especially of your creature man, you are the God and Father and ruler of your children; you are the Master of life and death, the guardian and benefactor of our souls. You fashion and transform everything at the proper time through your creative Word, as you know to be best in your deep wisdom and providence. Please accept now those who have gone ahead of us in our journey from this life.

And please accept us too at the proper time, when you have guided us in our bodily life as long as is to be for our benefit. Accept us as prepared by fear of you, but not worried and not cowering on that day of death, or uprooted by force like those who are lovers of the world and matter. May we instead embark eagerly for that everlasting, blessed life which is in Jesus the Prince, our Master; may glory come to him through all the ages of ages. Amen.

We make the request of you, Master, our God, to bring to life the souls of the dead for whom you gave up your own life. Please remember that we are dirt, and our lives are as ephemeral as flowers or the grass in the fields.

Please, merciful, kind, and considerate Master, remember that we are dirt, and our lives are as ephemeral as flowers or the grass in the fields.

Prayer

Dear God of power and mercy, since we can offer you the appropriate service and praise only with your help, may we please live the faith we profess and trust your promise of eternal life. We make this request

through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

1 Maccabees 9.1-22

When Demetrius heard that Nicanor and his army had fallen in battle, he again sent Bacchides and Alcimus into the land of Judah, along with the right wing of his army. They took the road to Galilee, and after camping opposite the ascent of Arbela, they captured it and killed a great number of people.

In the first month of 152, they encamped against Jerusalem; and then set out for Berea with twenty thousand infantry and two thousand cavalry. Judas, with three thousand picked men, had camped at Elasa. When his men saw the great number of the troops, they were terrified, and many slipped out of the camp, until only eight hundred remained.

As Judas saw that his army was melting away just when the battle loomed, he was panic-stricken, because he had no time to gather them. But in spite of his discouragement, he said to those who remained, "Let us advance to meet our enemies; perhaps we can put up a good fight against them."

They tried to dissuade him, and said, "It is certain that we cannot. Let us save our lives now, and come back with our relatives and then fight against them. There are too few of us now."

Judas answered, "Far be it from me to do such a thing as run away from them! If our time has come, let us die bravely for our relatives and not leave a stain on our glory!"

Then the army of Bacchides moved out of camp and took its position for combat. The cavalry were divided into two squadrons, and the slingers and archers came on ahead of the infantry, and all the bravest men were in the front line. Bacchides was on the right wing. Flanked by the two squadrons, the phalanx attacked as they blew their trumpets. Those who were on Judas's side also blew their trumpets; the earth shook with the noise of the armies, and the battle raged from morning till evening.

Seeing that Bacchides was on the right, with the main force of his army, Judas, with all the most stouthearted rallying to him, drove back the right wing and pursued them as far as the mountain slopes. But when the men on the left wing saw that the right wing was driven back, they turned and followed Judas and his men, taking them in the rear. The battle was fought desperately, and many on both sides fell wounded. Then Judas fell, and the rest fled.

Jonathan and Simon took their brother Judas and buried him in the tomb of their ancestors in Modein. All of Israel mourned him with great grief; they mourned for him for many days, and said, "How the mighty one, the savior of Israel, has fallen!"

The other acts of Judas, his battles, the brave deeds he performed, and his greatness, have not been recorded; but there are many of them.

Do not be afraid of the enemy's attack; remember how our ancestors were saved. So now let us cry to heaven, and our God will favor us.

Remember his wonderful deeds; how he dealt with Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea; so now let us cry to heaven, and our God will favor us.

Second Reading A Treatise on Death as a Blessing by St. Ambrose

The Emissary tells us, "The world is crucified to me, and I am crucified to the world." We are to understand that this death by crucifixion takes place in this life, and that this death is a blessing. So he goes on to urge us "to bear the death of Jesus with us in our bodies, because whoever carries the death of Jesus in his body will also carry the life of Master Jesus in his body."

Death must be active within us if life is also to be active within us. "Life" is life after death, a life that is a blessing. This blessing of life comes after victory, when the struggle is over, when the law of our fallen nature no longer rebels against the law of our reason, and when we no longer need to struggle against the body that leads to death, because the body already shares in victory. It seems to me that this "death" is more powerful than "life." I accept the authority of the Emissary, when he says, "And so death is active within us, but life is also active within us."

Yet the "death" of this one man was building up life for countless throngs of peoples! And so he teaches us to search out this kind of death

even in this life, so that the death of the Prince will shine out in our lives: that blessed death by which our outward self is destroyed and our inmost self renewed, and our earthly home crumbles away and a home in heaven opens before us.

The person who cuts himself off from this fallen nature of ours and frees himself from its chains is imitating death. These are the bonds spoken of by the Master through Isaiah: “Undo the bonds of injustice, untie the thongs of the yoke; set free the oppressed, and break every harness of evil.”

The Master allowed death to enter this world so that sin could come to an end; but he gave us the return to life from the dead so that our nature would not end once more in death; death was to bring guilt to an end, and the return to life was to enable our nature to continue forever.

“Death” in this context is a passover to be made by all mankind. You must keep facing it with perseverance. It is a passover from decay, from mortality, to immortality, from rough seas to a calm harbor. The word “death” should not trouble us; the blessings that come from a safe journey should bring us joy. What is death but the burial of sin and the return to life of goodness? Scripture says, “Let my soul die among the souls of the virtuous”; that is, let me be buried with the virtuous, so that I will take off my sins and put on the grace of the virtuous, those who carry the death of the Prince with them, in their bodies and their souls.

Here is a saying you can depend on: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we suffer with him, we will also be kings with him.

A patient man will stand firm until the right time, and then joy will break through for him; if we suffer with him, we will also be kings with him.

Prayer

Dear God of power and mercy, since we can offer you the appropriate service and praise only with your help, may we please live the faith we profess and trust your promise of eternal life. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

First Reading

Daniel 1.1-21

In the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came and laid siege to Jerusalem. YHWH handed over to him King Jehoiakim of Judah and some of the utensils in God's Temple, which he carried off to the land of Shinar and placed in the temple treasury of his god.

The king told his chief chamberlain Ashpenaz to bring in some of the Israelites of royal blood and the nobility, young men without any defect, handsome, intelligent, and wise, quick to learn, and of good judgment: the kind that could take their place in the king's palace; they were to be taught the language and literature of the Chaldeans, and after three years' training were to enter the king's service. The king allotted them a daily ration of food and wine from the royal table. Among these were men of Judah, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.

The chief chamberlain changed their names; Daniel was to be Beltshazzar, Hananiah Shadrach, Mishael Meshach, and Azariah Abednego.

But Daniel was resolved not to defile himself with the king's food or wine; so he petitioned the chief chamberlain to spare him this defilement. Though God had given Daniel the favor and sympathy of the chief chamberlain, he said to Daniel, "I am afraid of my master the king, who allotted your food and drink; if he sees that you look miserable by comparison with the other young men of your age, you will put my life in danger with the king."

Daniel then said to the steward whom the chief chamberlain had placed in charge of Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, "Would you

152 THIRTY-SECOND WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME

please test your servants for ten days; give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then see how we look in comparison with the other young men who eat from the royal table, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.” He acceded to this request, and tested them for ten days.

After ten days, they looked healthier and better fed than any of the young men who ate from the royal table; so the steward continued to take away the food and wine they were to receive, and gave them vegetables.

God gave these four young men knowledge and proficiency in all sorts of literature and science, and he bestowed on Daniel the understanding of all kinds of visions and dreams. At the end of the time the king had specified for their preparation, the chief chamberlain brought them before Nebuchadnezzar, and when the king had spoken with all of them, none was found equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; and so they entered the king’s service. In any question of wisdom or good sense which the king put to them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and sorcerers in his kingdom. Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus.

The Master filled them with wisdom and education, and the grace of his Spirit strengthened them; the Master filled their hearts with understanding.

In any question of wisdom or information which the king directed at them, he found their answers better than those of everyone else he had consulted; the Master filled their hearts with understanding.

Second Reading

A Homily from the Second Century

My brothers and sisters, we should look on Prince Jesus as God and judge of the living and the dead. We should not think little of him, because if we do not think much of him, we cannot hope to receive much from him. In addition, people who hear things like this and do not consider them very important commit sin, and we sin ourselves if we do not realize what we have been called from, who has called us, and where we have been called, as well as how much suffering Prince Jesus endured on our behalf.

Then how should we repay him? What results can we show that

would be appropriate for what he has given us? We are in his debt for so very many benefits: He has illuminated our minds; he has called us sons in the way a father does; he saved us when we were about to be destroyed. How then shall we repay him for his gifts?

We were spiritually blind and worshiped stones and pieces of wood, gold, silver, and bronze—things made by men—and our whole life was death. Darkness enfolded us, and nothing but gloom met our eyes. Then, by his will, we escaped from the cloud that enveloped us and recovered our sight, because he saw our numerous errors and the damnation that was waiting for us, and, since he knew that apart from him we had no hope of rescue, he pitied us and in his mercy saved us. He called us when we were not his people and willed us to become his people.

“Be happy, barren woman who never bore a child; shout for joy, if you never knew a mother’s labor pains; because the deserted wife will have more children than the one who has a husband.” When he says, “Be happy, barren woman who never bore a child,” he is speaking of us, because our Church was barren until children were given to her. When he says, “Shout for joy if you never knew a mother’s labor pains,” he means that we should not become exhausted like women in labor, and tirelessly and in all simplicity offer our prayers to God. He declares that “the deserted wife will have more children than the one who has a husband” because faith has now made our people—who seemed to be deserted by God—more numerous than those who were thought to possess him.

Another text says, “I have not come to call the virtuous; I came to call sinners to change heart,” because it is those who are dying who must be saved. It is a great, wonderful deed to hold up those who are falling rather than those who are already standing firm. The Prince willed to save people who were in danger of losing their souls, and he has been the rescue of many of them. When we were on the point of destruction, he came and called us.

God has not destined us to endure his rage; he has destined us for rescue through our Master Prince Jesus, who died for us so that we would live in him.

God rescued us from the power of darkness and brought us into the

154 THIRTY-SECOND WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME

Kingdom of his own beloved Son so that we would live in him.

Prayer

Dear God of power and mercy, please protect us from any harm, and give us freedom of spirit and health in mind and body to do your work on earth. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

Daniel 2.26-47

King Nebuchadnezzar asked Daniel, whom he called Belteshazzar, “Can you tell me about the dream I had and what it means?” In the king’s presence, Daniel gave this answer:

“The secret the king has asked about could not be explained to the king by the wise men, sorcerers, magicians, and astrologers. But there is a God in heaven who reveals secrets, and he has shown King Nebuchadnezzar what is to happen in the days that are coming; this was the dream you saw as you lay in bed:

“There came to you as you lay in bed thoughts about what would happen in the future, and the one who reveals secrets showed you what is going to happen. This secret has also been revealed to me; not that I am wiser than any other living person, but so that its meaning would be made known to the king, for you to understand the thoughts in your own mind.

“In your vision, my king, you saw a very large, extremely bright statue, terrifying in its appearance as it stood before you. The statue’s head was pure gold, its chest and arms were silver, its abdomen and thighs bronze, the legs iron, and its feet part iron and part clay.

“While you looked at the statue, a stone which was hewn from a mountain without a hand being put to it struck its iron and clay feet, and broke them to pieces. The iron, clay, bronze, silver, and gold all crumbled at once, as fine as the chaff on a threshing-floor in summer; and the wind blew it all away without leaving a trace. But the stone that hit the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

“This was the dream; we will now give the interpretation in the king’s presence. You, my king, are the king of all kings; the God of heaven has given you authority and strength, power and glory; he has handed over to you men, wild animals and birds in the air, wherever they live, and made you ruler of all of them; you are the head of gold.

“Another kingdom, inferior to yours, will take your place; and then a third kingdom, of bronze, will come and rule over the whole earth. There will then be a fourth kingdom, as strong as iron, which will smash and subdue all these others, just as iron smashes and crushes everything else.

“The feet and toes you saw, partly of potter’s clay and partly of iron, mean that it will be a divided kingdom, but still have some of the hardness of iron. As you saw the iron mixed with the clay and the toes partly iron and partly clay, the kingdom will be partly strong and partly fragile, like pottery. The iron mixed with pottery means that the leaders will seal their alliances by intermarriage, but they will not stay united, any more than iron alloys with clay.

“In the lifetime of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed or conquered by other people; instead, it will break in pieces all these kingdoms and put an end to them; and it will stand forever. That is the meaning of the stone you saw hewn from the mountain without a hand being put to it, which smashed the clay, iron, bronze, silver, and gold. The great God has revealed to the king what will happen in the future; this is exactly what you dreamed, and its meaning is certain.”

King Nebuchadnezzar then fell down and worshiped Daniel and ordered sacrifice and incense offered to him; the king said to Daniel, “Your God is really the God of gods and the Master of kings and a true revealer of secrets; that is why you were able to reveal this secret.”

The God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed; it will overwhelm and absorb all the kingdoms of the earth, and God’s kingdom will stand forever.

The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; if this stone falls on anyone, it will crush him; and God’s kingdom will stand forever.

*Second Reading**A Homily of the Second Century*

It is a great mercy that Prince Jesus has shown us. The first benefit we owe to his mercy is that those of us who are living do not sacrifice to dead gods or worship them; we have, through the Prince, attained a knowledge of the Father—and what else is knowledge of the Father but the recognition of the one through whom this knowledge comes to us? He himself states, “I will acknowledge before my Father everyone who acknowledges me.” And so this will be our reward if we acknowledge the one through whom we have been saved.

But how are we to show that we acknowledge him? By doing what he says, by not disobeying his commands, and by honoring him not only with our lips but with our whole heart and mind; because he says in Isaiah, “This people pays me lip service, but its heart is far from me.”

We must not simply call him Master, because that will not save us. “Not everyone who tells me, ‘Master, Master’ will be saved,” he warns, “but only those who do what is right.” So then, my brothers and sisters, let us show our faith in him by our deeds, by loving each other, by not committing adultery, by not finding fault with each other, or being envious. We should be chaste, merciful, and kind. We should have sympathy for each other, and not be greedy. We have to prove that we believe in him by performing actions like these and avoiding whatever is contrary to them, since we have respect for God rather than men.

If we fail to do this, we have the Master’s warning: “If you do not keep my commandments, even though I had pressed you to my heart, I will push you away from me and say to you, ‘Get out of my sight, you people whose actions are evil; you are complete strangers to me.’”

And so, my brothers and sisters, let us go into the arena in the knowledge that the match is about to begin. Many men travel a great distance for a crown that soon withers, and yet not all of them win it; only those who have strained every muscle and competed fairly. We should also fight so that we will all receive a crown; we should run a straight course in the race of Christian life, and set out in great numbers to take part in it, and then battle for the crown with all our might; even if we are not all able to win, at least let us draw near victory.

Now we should know with certainty that even when the match is for a crown that lasts only a day, if anyone is found to be breaking the rules, he is whipped and driven off the racecourse. What do you suppose, then,

will be the fate of the one who breaks the rules in the match of Christian life? Scripture says of those who have not kept the seal of their Bath unbroken, “The worms do not die and the fire never goes out. They will be a spectacle to everyone.”

You have turned away from idolatry to serve the living, true God, and now you are waiting for the coming from heaven of his Son, the one he brought back to life: Jesus, our rescuer from the fury that is coming.

Now, my children, live in him, so that when he appears you will be able to be fully confident and not turn away in shame from his coming: Jesus, our rescuer from the fury that is coming.

Prayer

Dear God of power and mercy, please protect us from any harm, and give us freedom of spirit and health in mind and body to do your work on earth. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

Daniel 3.8-12, 19-24, 91-97

Some of the Chaldeans came and accused the Judeans to King Nebuchadnezzar: “My king, may you live forever! You issued a decree, my king that everyone who heard the sound of trumpet, flute, lyre, harp, psaltery, bagpipe, and all the other musical instruments was to fall prostrate and worship the golden statue, and whoever did not was to be thrown into a white-hot furnace. There are some Judeans you made administrators of the province of Babylon, named Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; and these men, my king, have paid no attention to you; they will not serve your god or worship the golden statue you set up.”

Nebuchadnezzar’s face became livid with rage against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; and he ordered the furnace to be heated seven times the usual temperature and had some of the strongest men in his army tie up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and throw them into the white-hot furnace.

158 THIRTY-SECOND WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME

They were tied up and thrown into the white-hot furnace wearing their coats, hats, and other clothes, since the king's order was peremptory. So huge a fire was kindled in the furnace that the flames devoured the men who threw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into it; but these three fell, still tied, into the middle of the white-hot furnace—and they walked about in the flames, singing to God and blessing YHWH.

King Nebuchadnezzar rose hurriedly and asked his nobles, “Did we not throw three men into the fire tied up?”

“We certainly did, my king,” they answered.

“But I see four men,” he answered, “unfettered and unhurt, walking in the fire; and the fourth looks like a son of a god.”

Then Nebuchadnezzar came to the opening of the white-hot furnace and called to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego: “Come out, servants of the Supreme God!” at which Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out of the fire. When the satraps, prefects, governors, and nobles of the king assembled, they saw that the fire had had no power over the bodies of these men; not a hair on their heads had been singed, nor were their clothes changed; there was not even a smell of fire about them.

Nebuchadnezzar exclaimed, “May the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be blessed! He sent his angel to set free the servants who put their trust in him; they disobeyed the royal command and gave up their bodies rather than serve or worship any god but their own God. And therefore I decree for nations and peoples of every language that whoever blasphemes the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego is to be cut to pieces and his house destroyed; because there is no other god who can rescue in this way.”

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

The Master's angel went down into the furnace with Azariah and his companions, and drove the blazing flames out of the furnace; the fire did not even touch them or cause them any pain.

May the God who sent his angel to rescue the faithful servants who put their trust in him be blessed; the fire did not even touch them or cause them any pain.

*Second Reading**A Homily from the Second Century*

We should change heart away from our sins while we are still on earth. When a potter is making a vessel and it becomes misshapen or breaks in his hands, he shapes it again; but once it is placed in the oven, it is beyond repair. The clay in the craftsman's hands is an image of ourselves; and it teaches us that, while still in this world, we must wholeheartedly change heart from sins committed in the body and make it possible for the Master to save us while there is time. When we have left this world, we will no longer be able to change heart and confess our sins.

We must do the will of the Father, keep our bodies pure, and observe the Master's commandments, because this is the way to gain eternal life. The Master says this in the Good News: "If you have not been observant in small matters, who will entrust you with anything important? What I am telling you is that the man who is faithful in small things is faithful in the greatest things as well." In other words, in order to gain eternal life, we must remain pure and keep the seal of our Bath undefiled.

And none of you are to say that our bodies will not share in the judgment, or come back to life again. In what were you saved? In what did you receive your sight? Think for a moment. Was it not in this very body? Our bodies are the temple of God, and as such we must guard them, because we will be judged in the body in the same way as we were called in the body. Since the Prince, our Master and Savior, who in the beginning was spirit, became flesh and in this way called us, it is in this flesh of ours that we will also receive our reward.

And so, we should love each other, so that we will all reach the kingdom of God. While we can still be healed, let us surrender ourselves into the hands of our divine physician and give him his payment—the payment of true sorrow for our sins. Since the one who knows everything sees what is in our hearts, let us praise him with our hearts as well as our lips. He will then accept us as his children. The Master himself has said, "Those who do my Father's will are my brothers and sisters."

Take off the burden of all your past sins, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. "I take no pleasure in the death of anyone," says the Master; "come back to me and live."

The Master deals with you patiently, because he does not want

160 THIRTY-SECOND WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME

anyone to die, and for everyone to repent. “I take no pleasure in the death of anyone,” says the Master; “come back to me and live.”

Prayer

Dear God of power and mercy, please protect us from any harm, and give us freedom of spirit and health in mind and body to do your work on earth. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

Daniel 5.1-2, 5-9, 13-17, 25-6.1

King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his lords, with whom he drank. Under the influence of the wine, he ordered the gold and silver utensils which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple in Jerusalem to be brought in so that the king, his lords, wives, and entertainers could drink from them.

Suddenly, opposite the lampstand, the fingers of a human hand appeared, writing on the plaster of the wall in the king's palace. When the king saw the wrist and hand that wrote, his face blanched; his thoughts terrified him, his hips shook and his knees knocked.

The king shouted for the enchanters, Chaldeans, and astrologers to be brought in. “Anyone who reads this writing and tells me what it means,” he told the wise men of Babylon, “will wear purple, a golden collar around his neck, and be third in the government of the kingdom.” But though all the king's wise men came in, none of them could either read the writing or tell the king what it meant. Then king Belshazzar was panic-stricken; his face turned ashen, and his lords were thrown into confusion.

Daniel was then brought into the presence of the king, and the king asked him, “Are you Daniel, the Judean exile my father the king brought from Judah? I have heard that the spirit of God is in you, and that you possess brilliant knowledge and extraordinary wisdom. You see, the wise men and sorcerers were brought in to me to read this writing and tell me its meaning, but they could not say what the words meant. But I have

heard that you can interpret dreams and solve difficulties; if you can read the writing and tell me what it means, you will wear purple, have a gold collar around your neck, and be third in the government of the kingdom.”

Daniel answered the king, “You may keep your gifts, or give your presents to someone else; but I will read the writing for you, my king, and tell you what it means. This is the writing that was engraved on the wall: Mene, tekel, and peres. These words mean this: mene: God has set a number to your kingdom and put an end to it; tekel: you have been weighed on the scales and found to be short weight; peres, your kingdom has been divided and given to the Medes and Persians.”

They then, by order of Belshazzar, dressed Daniel in purple, with a gold collar around his neck, and proclaimed him third in the government of the kingdom. That same night, the Chaldean king Belshazzar was assassinated, and the Mede Darius succeeded to the kingdom at the age of sixty-two.

Do not be arrogant in the presence of the Supreme Being, because God is our judge; he pushes one man down and lifts another one up. The Master holds a cup of bitter wine in his hand, and all the world’s sinners will drink from it.

Whoever worships the beast or its image will drink the wine of God’s wrath; the Master holds a cup of bitter wine in his hand, and all the world’s sinners will drink from it.

Second Reading

A Homily from the Second Century

For the sake of eternal life, my brothers and sisters, we should do the will of the Father who called us, resist the temptations that lead us into sin, and exert all our effort to advance in virtue. We should have reverence for God for fear of the harm that comes from impiety; if we are zealous in doing good, we will have peace; but there is no peace for those who are governed by human respect and prefer present enjoyment to the future promises. They realize neither the torment that is in store for them because of these momentary pleasures, nor the joy of the promises to come. And actually, this could be endured if their conduct only affected themselves, but in fact they persist in corrupting the innocent, unaware that they are incurring double condemnation, for

162 THIRTY-SECOND WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME

themselves and their students.

So let us serve God with a pure heart, and then we will be living as we should. If we fail to serve him because of our disbelief, we will only be miserable. “Those whose faith is wavering are miserable,” says the prophet; “they are the people who doubt in their hearts and say, ‘We head all these even when our parents were alive, and day after day we have waited for any proof of it, with no result. You fools! Think of a tree, and see how you are like it. A vine, for example, first sheds its leaves and then the buds appear; after this there come the sour grapes and finally a cluster of ripe fruit. And that is how it is with my people. They have had their troubles and anguish; but their reward will come afterward.’”

And so, my brothers, to gain the reward we must keep on in hope with unwavering faith. The one who made the promise to repay every man as his deeds deserve will be faithful to it. If we do what is right in God’s sight, we will enter his kingdom and receive the promise “which no ear has heard, no eye seen, no human heart conceived.”

So let us live loving, honest lives, in hourly expectation of the kingdom of God, since we do not know when God will come. Let us change heart immediately from our great stupidity and evil, and from now on always be ready to do good. We should erase past sins by being truly sorry for them, and then we will be saved. We must have no desire to curry favor with men, nor should we think only of making ourselves acceptable to our fellow Christians. We should live honest lives to win the respect of non-Christians as well; the Name must not be blasphemed because of us.

Be steadfast; stand firm; always devote yourselves fully to the Master’s work, because you know that your work in the Master cannot be futile.

Never grow weary of doing good, because you know that your work in the Master cannot be futile.

Prayer

Dear God of power and mercy, please protect us from any harm, and give us freedom of spirit and health in mind and body to do your work on earth. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

*First Reading**Daniel 9 1-4, 18-27*

It was in the first year that Darius, son of Ahasuerus, a Medean by race, reigned over the kingdom of the Chaldeans; in that first year of his reign, I, Daniel, tried to understand in the Scriptures how the years YHWH spoke of to the prophet Jeremiah were counted: that there would be seventy years completed from the destruction of Jerusalem.

I turned to God YHWH, and made my request with earnest prayers, fasting, sackcloth, and ashes. I made a request of YHWH, my God, and said, “Please listen, my God, and give me your attention; open your eyes and see our ruin and the city which bears your name. When we are making our request to you, we are not relying on our virtuous actions; we are counting on your great mercy. Please, YHWH, listen to us! Please, YHWH, pardon us! Please, YHWH, give us your attention and act without delay, for your own sake, my God, because this city and your people bear your name!”

I will still busy with my prayer, and confessing my own sins and the sins of my people Israel, and making my request of YHWH, on behalf of his holy mountain—I was still occupied with this prayer—when Gabriel, the one I had seen before in a vision, came to me in rapid flight at the time of the evening sacrifice. He gave me instruction in these words: “Daniel, I have now come to give you understanding. When you began your request, an answer was given, and I have come to report it, since you are loved. And so pay attention to the answer and understand the vision:

Seventy weeks are decreed

for your people and your holy city;
 then disobedience will stop and sin will end;
 guilt will be atoned,
 eternal virtue will be introduced,
 vision and prophesy authenticated,
 and a supremely holy person will be anointed.

Know and understand this:

164 THIRTY-SECOND WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME

From the time the message was announced
that Jerusalem was to be rebuilt,
until the one who is anointed and is a leader,
there will be seven weeks.
During sixty-two weeks,
it will be rebuilt,
with streets and ditches
in a time of trouble.
After the sixty-two weeks,
one who is anointed will be cut down
when he does not possess the city;
and the people of a leader who will come
will destroy the sanctuary.
Then the end will come like a river in flood;
there will be war until the end,
until the devastation that has been decreed.
For one week, he will make
a firm agreement with the masses;
half of the week
he will abolish sacrifices and offerings;
the horrible abomination will be on the Temple wing
until the ruin that is decreed
has been poured over the horror.”

Please look down from your holy home, Master, and think of us; turn your ear toward us, my God, and listen to us; open your eyes and look out at our suffering.

Please, Master of armies, restore us; have your face shine on us and we will be saved; open your eyes and look out at our suffering.

Second Reading

A Homily from the Second Century

“My name is constantly blasphemed by unbelievers,” says the Master. “But the man who causes my name to be blasphemed is doomed.” Why is the Master’s name blasphemed? Because we say one thing and do something else. When they hear God’s words on our lips, unbelievers are amazed at their beauty and power; but when they see that these words have no effect on our lives, their admiration turns to scorn, and they

dismiss words like this as myths and fairy tales.

They listen, for example, when we tell them that God has said, "It is no credit to you if you love those who love you; only if you love your enemies and those who hate you." They are full of admiration at such extraordinary virtue; but when they observe that we not only fail to love those who hate us, but even those who love us, they laugh us to scorn, and the Name is blasphemed.

And so, my brothers and sisters, if we do the will of God the Father, we will be members of the first spiritual Church that was created before the sun and the moon; but if we fail to do the will of the Master, we will be among those to whom it is said in Scripture, "My house has been made into a den for thieves!" We must choose, then, if we want to be saved, to be members of the Church of life.

You surely cannot be ignorant of the fact that the living Church is the body of the Prince; because Scripture says, "God made man male and female." Now the male signifies the Prince, and the female signifies the Church, which, according to both the Old and New Treaties, is no recent creation; it has existed from the beginning. At first, the Church was purely spiritual, just as our Jesus was spiritual; but it became visible in the last days to save us.

That is, the spiritual Church was revealed in the body of the Prince, to show us that if we uphold its honor in the outward, visible form and do not defile it, we will be made parts of it through the Holy Spirit in the true, spiritual sense. That is, the body which is the Church is a copy of the Spirit, and no one who defaces the copy can have any part in what the copy represents.

In other words, my brothers and sisters, you must preserve the honor of the body in order to share in the Spirit. Because if we say that the body is the Church and the Spirit is the Prince, it follows that anyone who dishonors his own body is dishonoring the Church; and this sort of man will have no part in the Spirit, which is the Prince. But if the Holy Spirit is joined to it, this body can receive an immortal life that is amazing beyond words, because the blessings God has prepared for his chosen surpass all human powers of description.

The Master of armies, the God of Israel, says this: "Reform your ways and your actions, and I will live with you in this place."

166 THIRTY-SECOND WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME

Draw near and he will draw near to you; scrub your hands clean and purify your hearts; and I will live with you in this place.

Prayer

Dear God of power and mercy, please protect us from any harm, and give us freedom of spirit and health in mind and body to do your work on earth. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

Daniel 10.1-21

In the third year of King Cyrus of Persia, a revelation was given to Daniel, who had been named Belteshazzar. The revelation was certain: a great war; he understood this from the vision.

In those days, I, Daniel, mourned three full weeks. I ate no good-tasting food, I took no meat or wine, and I did not anoint myself at all until the end of the three weeks.

On the twenty-fourth of the first month, I was on the bank of the great river Tigris; as I looked up, I saw a man dressed in linen with a belt of gold around his waist. His body was like chrysolite, his face shone like lightning, his eyes were like burning torches, his arms and feet looked like burnished bronze, and his voice sounded like the roar of a crowd.

I alone, Daniel, saw the vision; but a great terror seized the people who were with me; they ran off and hid, although they did not see the vision. So I was left alone, watching this great vision. No strength remained in me; I turned the color of death, and was powerless. When he heard the sound of his voice, I fell forward in a faint.

But then a hand touched me, and lifted me up onto my hands and knees. "Daniel, the one I love," he said to me, "understand the words that I am speaking to you. Stand up, because my mission now is to you."

When he said this to me, I stood up, trembling. "Do not be afraid, Daniel," he continued. "From the first day you made up your mind to acquire understanding and humble yourself before God, your prayer was heard. Because if it, I started out; but the ruler of the kingdom of Persia

stood in my way for twenty-one days, until finally Michael, one of the chief rulers, came to help me. I left him there with the ruler of the kings of Persia, and came to make you understand what will happen to your people in the days that are coming; because there is still a vision about those days.”

While he was speaking to me in this way, I fell forward and kept silent. Then something like a man’s hand touched my lips; I opened my mouth and said to the one facing me, “My master, I was gripped with pangs of agony at the vision, and was powerless. How can my master’s slave speak with you, my master? Because now no strength or even breath is left in me.”

The one who looked like a man touched me again and strengthened me, as he said, “Do not be afraid, my friend; you are safe; be brave and grow strong.”

When he spoke to me, I grew strong and said, “Speak, my master, because you have given me strength.”

“Do you know,” he asked, “why I have come to you? I must fight the ruler of Persia again soon. When I leave, the ruler of Greece will come; but I will tell you what is written in the truthful book. No one supports me against all these except your ruler Michael.”

From the moment you resolved to acquire understanding and to humble yourself before God, your prayer was heard, and this is why I have come.

Do not be afraid, Daniel; I will tell you what is written in the book of truth; your prayer was heard, and this is why I have come.

Second Reading

A Homily from the Second Century

As to self-control, I believe I have given you good advice. No one who follows it will have any reason for regret and will save his own soul and mine also, since I have been his advisor. Actually, there is a not insignificant reward in converting an erring soul and saving it from destruction; and also, whether it is our duty to speak or listen, we have it in our power to compensate in some way the God who created us by speaking or listening with faith and love.

We must remain firm in our faith, therefore, and live honest and holy lives, because then we will feel relaxed and confident when we present our requests to God, who says, “While you are still speaking, I will say,

168 THIRTY-SECOND WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME

“Yes, I am here.” In these words, the Master makes a wonderful promise, and shows us that he is more ready to give than we are to ask. We all have a share in this extraordinary goodness, so the great blessings we receive should never make us envy each other; in fact, the degree of pleasure these words bring to those who live by them is equaled only by the condemnation they will bring on those who disregard them.

So you see, my brothers and sisters, that we have been given every motive to turn our lives around. We have been called by God, and now it is up to us to return to him while we still have time and someone who is ready to receive us. Because if we give up sinful pleasures and practice self-control by refusing to yield to our evil desires, we will share in the mercy of Jesus.

You should know, however, that the day of judgment is already nearing like a flaming furnace. Sun, moon, and stars will be consumed, and the whole earth will become like lead melting in a fire. All that each man has done, whether it is overtly or covertly, will then be brought to light.

And so a very good way of atoning for our sins is by being generous to the poor. Fasting is better than prayer, but giving charity surpasses both, because “love buries a great many sins.” Still, prayer frees the soul from death if it comes from a good conscience; and it is a blessing for a man to be found rich in these virtues; by relieving the poor, he will himself be relieved of his sins.

To make sure that none of us is lost, we must repent from the bottom of our hearts. Since we have been commanded to go out and rescue idolaters and teach them, is it not even more important to save souls who already know God? If we are all to be saved, we will have to help each other and support the weak in their struggle to live a good life; when one of us does wrong, it is for the others to warn him and persuade him of his error.

Keep yourselves in God’s love as you wait for the mercy of our Master Prince Jesus, which leads to eternal life.

We must reject atheistic ways and worldly desires and live controlled, honest, and devout lives in this world, as you wait for the mercy of our Master Prince Jesus, which leads to eternal life.

Prayer

Dear God of power and mercy, please protect us from any harm, and give us freedom of spirit and health in mind and body to do your work on earth. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

*First Reading**Daniel 12.1-13*

The angel told me,
 “At that time, the great ruler Michael
 the guardian of your people
 will come forward;
 it will be a time unsurpassed in suffering
 since nations began until that time.
 At that time, your people—
 everyone who is found written in the book—will escape.
 Many of those who are asleep
 in the dirt of the earth will waken;
 some will live forever,
 and others be an eternal horror and disgrace.
 But those who are wise will shine bright,
 like the splendor of the sky,
 and those who lead many people to virtue
 will be like stars forever.

“As for you, Daniel, keep the message secret and seal the book until the end time; many, many people will fall away and evil will increase.”

I, Daniel, looked, and saw two others, one standing on each bank of the river. One of them said to the man dressed in linen, who was upstream, “How long will it be until the end of these appalling things?”

The man dressed in linen, who was upstream, lifted his right hands to the sky, and I heard him swear by the one who lives forever that it would be for a year, two years, and half a year; and that, when the power of the destroyer of the holy people was brought to an end, all of this would end.

170 THIRTY-SECOND WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME

I heard this, but did not understand it, and so I asked, “My master, what follows this?”

“Go, Daniel,” he said, “because the words are to be kept secret and sealed until the end time. Many, many people will be refined, purified, and tested, but evil people will show themselves as evil; none of them will have understanding—but the wise will have it. From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the horrible abomination is set up, there will be one thousand two hundred ninety days. It will be a blessing for a man to have patience and to persevere through the one thousand three hundred thirty-five days. Go, take your rest; you will rise for your reward at the end of days.”

Those considered to deserve to be brought back to life from the dead can no longer die; they are like angels; they are children of God, because they are children of the resurrection.

He is not a God of the dead; he is a God of the living, because to him everything is alive; they are like angels; they are children of God, because they are children of the resurrection.

Second Reading

A Homily from the Second Century

Let us be sure that when judgment day comes, our place will be among those who are expressing gratitude to God and who have served him, and not with the atheists who face condemnation. In my case, I am only a sinner, not yet beyond the reach of temptation; but even in the midst of all the devil’s chicanery, I still work hard to make progress and hope to achieve at least some virtue, because I am afraid of the judgment that is waiting for me.

My brothers and sisters, you have heard the utterance of God, who is the very fountainhead of truth. And so I now read you an appeal to pay attention to what is written and by this to save both yourselves and your reader. The reward I ask is for you to repent with your whole heart, to save yourselves, and find life. If we do this, we will set an example for all the young people, for whom the glory and goodness of God is a challenge to be generous in his service.

Let me say also that when we are given a warning and corrected for doing something wrong, we should not be so foolish as to be offended and angry. There are times when we are unconscious of the sins we

commit because our hearts are fickle, and without enough faith. Futile desires cloud our minds. We need to pull ourselves up, therefore, because our very rescue is at stake.

Those who keep God's commandments have reason for happiness; they may have to suffer for a short time in this world, but they will come back to life again and their reward will last forever. No one who holds God in reverence should be depressed over the hardships of this present time, because a time of bliss is waiting for him. He will live again in heaven in the companionship of all those who have gone before him; and he will be happy for all eternity, never to know sorrow again.

So do not be disturbed at the sight of immoral men possessing great wealth while God's slaves suffer destitution. We must have faith, my brothers and sisters. Since we are competing in the match set up by the living God, we are receiving the training in this present life that will make us fit to be crowned in the life to come. No honest man becomes rich overnight; he has to wait for the reward of his labor. If God gave virtue an immediate payment, we would immediately find ourselves making bargains, instead of becoming more perfect in his service. Although to all outward appearance, we may be irreproachable, we would be looking for our own advantage, not God, and bringing down on our sinful souls the divine judgment that would soon make us feel the full weight of our chains.

May glory come through all the ages, forever and ever, to the one invisible God, the Father of truth, who sent out the Savior, the author of immortality, and through him revealed to us the truth and heavenly life. Amen.

Prayer

Dear God of power and mercy, please protect us from any harm, and give us freedom of spirit and health in mind and body to do your work on earth. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

First Reading

Joel 2.21-3.5

This is what is said by YHWH:
Do not be afraid, my land;
 be full of joy and happiness,
 because YHWH has done marvels!
Do not be afraid, animals in the fields,
 because the pastures in the plain are green;
the trees are bearing their fruit,
 the figs and the vines are giving their yield.
And you too, children of Zion, leap for joy
 and find your pleasure in your God YHWH.
He has given you a teacher of virtue;
 he has made the rain fall for you,
 the early and late rain, just as it used to be.
Your threshing floors will be full of grain
 and the vats will overflow with wine and oil.
And I will repay you for the years
 which have been eaten by locusts,
and by grasshoppers and cutworms—
 my great army, which I sent among you.
You will eat and have your fill
 and will praise the name of YHWH, your God,
because he has dealt amazingly with you;
 my people will not be embarrassed ever again.
And you will know that I am in the midst of Israel;
 I am YHWH, your God, and there is no other god;
 my people will never again be embarrassed.
Then afterward, I will pour out
 my Spirit on all mankind.

Your sons and daughters will utter prophecies;
 your old men will dream dreams,
 and your young men see visions;
 I will even pour my spirit in those days
 upon slaves and maidservants.
 And I will perform miracles in heaven and on earth:
 blood, fire, and columns of smoke;
 The sun will turn dark,
 and the moon turn to blood
 at the coming of YHWH's day,
 that great, terrifying day.
 Then everyone who calls on YHWH's name
 will find rescue;
 because there will be a remnant on Mount Zion,
 as YHWH foretold;
 and in Jerusalem there will be survivors
 whom YHWH will call.

There will be signs in the sun, moon, and stars. When you see all this happen, know that God's Kingdom is near.

Be on your guard and pray, because you do not know when the time will come. When you see all this happen, know that God's Kingdom is near.

Second Reading *A Discourse on the Psalms by St. Augustine*

“All the trees in the forest will show their joy before the face of the Master, because he has come; he has come to judge the earth.” At his first coming, his own voice stated in the Good news, “After this, you will see the Son of Man coming upon the clouds.” What does he mean by “after this”? Does he not mean that the Master will come at a future time when all the nations of the earth will be striking their breasts in grief? He came previously through his reporters, and he filled the whole world. We should not resist his first coming, so that we will not dread the second.

Then what should a Christian do? He ought to use the world, not become its slave. And what does this mean? It means having but not having. This is what the Emissary says: “My brothers and sisters, the designated time is short; from now on, those who have wives should live

as though they had none, and those who are grieving as though they were not grieving, and those who are happy as if they were not happy; and those who are buying as if they had no merchandise, and those who deal with this world as if they had no dealings with it. Because the form of this world is about to cease to exist. But I want you to be without anxiety.”

A person who has no anxiety waits without fear until his Master comes; because what sort of love for the Prince is it to be afraid of his coming? Brothers and sisters, should we not be blushing with shame? We love him, and yet we are afraid of his coming. Are we really certain that we love him? Or do we love our sins more? So we should hate our sins and love the one who will exact punishment for them; he will come whether we want it or not. Do not think that because he is not coming just now, he will not come at all. He will come, but you do not know when; and provided he finds you ready, your ignorance of the time of his coming will not be held against you.

“All the trees of the forest will show their joy.” He has come the first time, and he will come again to pass judgment on the earth; he will find those who believed in his first coming full of joy, “because he has come.”

“He will judge the world fairly and the peoples in his truth.” What are fairness and truth? He will gather to him for the judgment his chosen, and will set the others apart; he will place some on his right and others on his left. What is more fair and what is more true than that those who were not themselves willing to show mercy before the judge’s coming should not expect mercy from the judge?

But those who were willing to show mercy will be judged with mercy, because this will be said to those placed on his right: “Come, those my Father has blessed, and take possession of the kingdom which has been prepared for you from the beginning of the world.” And he counts in their favor their deeds of mercy: “Because I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me a drink.”

What is assigned to those on his left side? That they refused to show mercy. And where will they go? “Leave me into everlasting fire.” Hearing this condemnation will cause a great deal of wailing. But what has another psalm said? “A virtuous person will be held in everlasting remembrance; he will not be afraid of a harmful report.” What is the harmful report? “Leave me into everlasting fire, which was made ready

for the devil and his angels.” Anyone who is happy to hear the good report will not be afraid of the bad one; this is fairness, and this is truth.

Or is it that because you are unjust you expect the judge not to be just? Because you are a liar, is the one who is truthful not to be true? No, if you want to receive mercy, be merciful before he comes; forgive whatever has been done against you; give to others from your surplus. Whose possessions would you be giving from, if not from his? If you were to give what was yours, it would be generosity; but since what you are giving is his, it is restitution. “Because what do you have that you have not received?” These are the sacrifices that are pleasing to God: mercy, humility, praise, peace, and love. Let us bring things like these, then, and we will wait free from fear for the coming of the judge “who will judge the world fairly and the peoples in his truth.”

The Son of Man will come in the glory of his Father with his angels; then he will pay each person what his deeds deserve.

He will judge the world with justice and the peoples with truth; then he will pay each person what his deeds deserve.

Prayer

Dear Father of everything good, please keep us faithful in serving you, because to serve you is our lasting joy. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



Monday

First Reading

Joel 4.1-3,9-21

This is what is said by YHWH:
 Yes, in those days, and at the time
 when I restore the fortunes
 of Judah and Jerusalem,
 I will assemble all the nations
 and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat,
 and I will pass judgment on them there
 on behalf of my people and my inheritance Israel;

176 THIRTY-THIRD WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME

because they have scattered them among the nations
and divided my land.
They have played at dice over my people;
they gave a boy for a prostitute
and sold a girl for the wine they drank.
Report this among the nations:
Announce a war
and rally the military to arms!
Have all the soldiers
report and march.
Beat your plowshares into swords
and your pruning hooks into spears;
and have weak men say, "I am a warrior!"
Hurry and come, all you peoples in the neighborhood;
assemble there!
Bring down, YHWH, your soldiers.
Have the nations be roused and come up
to the Valley of Jehoshaphat;
because there I will sit on the bench
and judge all the neighboring nations.
Apply your sickle
because the harvest is ripe;
come and tread the vats
because the winepress is full;
the vats are overflowing,
because their malice is great.
Crowd on crowd throng in
to the valley of decision;
because YHWH's day is near
in the valley of decision.
Sun and moon have grown dark
and the stars are holding back their brightness.
YHWH is roaring out of Zion
and raising his voice from Jerusalem;
the sky and the earth are quaking—
but YHWH is a refuge for his people,
and a stronghold for the men of Israel.

Then you will know that I, YHWH, am your God,
 living on my holy mountain Zion;
 Jerusalem will be holy,
 and foreigners will pass through it no longer.
 And then on that day,
 the mountains will drip new wine
 and the hills flow with milk;
 Judah's riverbeds
 will flow with water;
 a fountain will rise from YHWH's house
 to water the Valley of Shittim.
 Egypt will be a wasteland
 and Edom a desert,
 because of the violence done to the people of Judah,
 because they shed innocent blood in their land.
 But Judah will remain forever,
 and Jerusalem will last through every generation.
 I will avenge their blood
 and not leave it unpunished.
 YHWH is alive in Zion.

The mountains will run with sweet wine, and all Judah's riverbeds flow with water. A fountain will spring up from the Master's house. If anyone is thirsty, come forward and receive the water of life, freely given to all those who desire it.

The angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, which flowed from the throne of God and the Lamb. If anyone is thirsty, come forward and receive the water of life, freely given to all those who desire it.

Second Reading *A Treatise on Forgiveness by St. Fulgentius of Ruspe*

“In a moment, in an eyeblink, as the final trumpet sounds—because the trumpet will in fact sound—the dead will come back to life incorruptible, and we will be changed.” In saying “we,” Paul is indicating that the gift of that future change will also be given to those who are united to him and his companions during their time on earth by honest lives within the communion of the Church. He hints at the nature of the change

when he says, "This corruptible body must put on incorruptibility, and this mortal body immortality." And so, for men to have the transformation which is the reward for the virtuous, they must first undergo a change here on earth, a change which is God's free gift. Those who have been changed from evil to good in this life are promised this future change as a reward.

Through becoming virtuous and the spiritual return to life, grace now effects in them an initial change that is God's gift. Later on, through the return to life of the body, the transformation of the virtuous will be brought to completion, and they will experience a perfect, lasting, unchangeable glorification. The purpose of this change brought about in them by the gifts of both making virtuous and glorification is that they will be able to remain in an eternal, changeless state of joy.

Here on earth, they are changed by the first return to life, in which they are illuminated and converted, and in this way pass from death to life, from sinfulness to holiness, from unbelief to faith, and from evil actions to a holy life. For this reason, the second death has no power over them. These are the ones the Book of Revelation speaks of when it says, "It is a blessing for a man to share in the first resurrection; the second death has no power over these people." Just as the first resurrection consists in the conversion of the heart, the second death consists in unending torment.

And so everyone who does not want to be condemned to the endless punishment of the second death should now hurry to share in the first return to life; because if any people during this life are changed out of fear of God and pass from an evil life to a good one, they pass from death to life, and later they will be transformed from a disgraceful state to a glorious one.

You have died, and your life is hidden with the Prince in God. When your life the Prince appears, you will appear with him in glory.

You must consider yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Jesus the Prince, our Master. When your life the Prince appears, you will appear with him in glory.

Prayer

Dear Father of everything good, please keep us faithful in serving you,

because to serve you is our lasting joy. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

Zechariah 9.1-10.2

A prophesy:

YHWH's utterance is upon the land of Hadrach,
 and Damascus is where it rests,
 because Aram's cities belong to YHWH,
 as do all the tribes of Israel,
 and Hamath, on its border,
 as well as Tyre and Sidon, however wise they are.
 Tyre built itself a fortress
 and heaped up silver like dirt
 and gold like the mud in the streets.
 Now YHWH will strip it of what it owns
 and strike down its power on the sea,
 and it will be eaten up by fire.
 Ashkelon will see this and be afraid,
 and so will Gaza; it will be in agony,
 as will Ekron, because its hopes will be dashed.
 The king will vanish out of Gaza
 and Ashkelon will have no one living there,
 and rabble will occupy Ashdod.
 I will destroy the pride of the Philistines
 and take the bloody meat from their mouths,
 and remove their abominations from between their teeth.
 They will also become a rag for our God
 and will be like a family in Judah,
 and Ekron will be like the Jebusites.
 I will camp by my house as its guard,
 so that no one will pass in and out;
 no oppressor will pass over them again,
 because now I am paying attention to their trouble.

180 THIRTY-THIRD WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME

Be overjoyed, daughter Zion;
shout in your glee, daughter Jerusalem!
Now your king is coming to you;
he is a virtuous savior,
a meek one, and he rides on a donkey;
on a colt, the foal of an ass.
He will rid Ephraim of chariots
and Jerusalem of horses;
warriors' bows will be banished,
and he will proclaim peace to the nations.
His reign will extend from sea to sea
and from the River to the earth's ends.
And as for you, because of the blood of your Treaty with me,
I will bring your prisoners out of the dungeon.
In the return to the fortress
of the waiting prisoners,
this very day, I will return you
double for your evils.
You see, I will bend Judah as if he were my bow,
and I will arm myself with Ephraim;
I will rally your sons, Zion,
against your sons, Yavan,
and I will use you as a warrior's sword.
YHWH will appear over them,
and his arrow will shoot out as lighting;
God YHWH will sound the trumpet
and come in a storm from the south.
YHWH of armies will be a shield over them;
they will win out over sling stones
and trample them underfoot;
they will drink blood like wine
till they are filled with it like libation bowls,
and like the corners of the altar.
And their God YHWH will save them on that day;
he will rescue his people, like a flock.
Because they are the jewels in a crown
raised high up over his land.

Yes, what wealth is theirs! What beauty!
 It is grain that makes the young men flourish,
 and new wine makes the maidens bloom.
 Ask YHWH for rain in the spring;
 it is YHWH who makes the storm clouds
 and sends men the pouring rain;
 and gives grassy fields to everyone;
 because the teraphim are talking nonsense
 and diviners are having false visions;
 they are telling deceitful dreams
 and offering empty comfort.
 This is why they are wandering like sheep,
 miserable ones that have no shepherd.

Be overjoyed, daughter Jerusalem; now your king, the virtuous one who will save you, is coming; he is humble, seated on a donkey; on a colt, the foal of an ass.

Jesus found a donkey and mounted it, as Scripture says: Now your king, the virtuous one who will save you is coming; he is humble, seated on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of an ass.

Second Reading

A Discourse by St. Andrew of Crete

Let us say to the Prince, "Praise the one who is coming in the Master's name, the King of Israel!" Let us wave like palm branches before him the words inscribed above him on the cross; let us show him honor, not with olive branches but with the splendor of merciful deeds to each other. Let us spread the thoughts and desires of our hearts under his feet like the clothes, so that as he enters with the whole of his being, he will draw our whole being into himself and place the whole of himself in us. Let us say to Zion in the words of the prophet, "Be brave, daughter Zion; do not be afraid; now your king is coming to you, humble and mounted on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden."

The one who is coming is present everywhere and pervades everything; he is coming to achieve in you his work of rescue for everyone. The one who is coming is the one who came to call sinners, not virtuous people, to a change of heart; he is coming to recall those who strayed into sin. Do not be afraid, then; "God is there among you, and you will

not be shaken.”

Accept him with open, outstretched hands, because it was on his own hands that he sketched you. Accept the one who laid your foundations on the palms of his hands. Accept him, because he took upon himself all that belongs to us except sin, to consume what is ours in what is his. Be glad, city of Zion, our mother, and do not be afraid; “Celebrate your festivals.” Give the one who has come to us in your glory for his mercy. Be overjoyed, daughter Jerusalem; sing and leap about in glee. “Be illuminated; light up,” we cry to you, as holy Isaiah trumpeted, “because the light has come to you, and the Master’s radiance has risen over you.”

What kind of “light” is this? It is the one that “shines on every man that comes into the world.” It is the eternal light, the timeless light revealed in time, the light revealed in flesh, though hidden by nature, the light that shone round the shepherds and guided the wise men. It is the light that was in the world from the beginning, through which the world was made; and yet the world did not recognize it. It is the light that came into its own lands, and its own people would not accept it.

And what is this “glory of the Master”? Clearly, it is the cross on which the Prince received his glory; he is the radiance of the Father’s glory, just as he said when he faced his suffering: “Now the Son of Man has shown what he really is, and God has shown what he is in him, and will show his reality without delay.” The glory he is speaking of here is his lifting up on the cross, because the Prince’s glory is his cross and his being raised upon it, as he plainly says, “When I have been raised up, I will draw everyone to myself.”

Praise the one who is coming in the Master’s name; our Master God has let his light shine on us.

The Master has done this, and it is a marvel in our eyes; our Master God has let his light shine on us.

Prayer

Dear Father of everything good, please keep us faithful in serving you, because to serve you is our lasting joy. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.


 ednesday
*First Reading**Zechariah 10.3-11.3*

This is what is said by YHWH:
 My rage has been kindled against the shepherds,
 and I will punish the leaders;
 because YHWH, leader of armies, will visit his flock,
 the house of Judah,
 and make them his stately war horse.
 The leaders and chiefs will come from him,
 as well as the warrior's bows and every officer.
 They will all be warriors,
 trampling the mud of the streets in battle;
 they will go to war because YHWH is with them,
 and will rout the cavalry.
 I will put strength into the house of Judah,
 and I will save the house of Joseph;
 I will bring them back, because I have mercy on them;
 they will be as if I had never thrown them away,
 because I am their God YHWH, and I will listen to them.
 Then Ephraim will be full of heroes,
 and their hearts will be as if they were cheered by wine;
 their children will see this and be happy
 and their hearts will find their joy in YHWH.
 I will whistle for them to gather,
 and when I redeem them
 there will be as many as before.
 I planted them among the nations,
 but they still remember me in far-off lands;
 they will raise their children and return.
 I will bring them back from the land of Egypt
 and gather them from Assyria.
 I will bring them into Gilead and Lebanon,
 but these will not be big enough for them;
 I will cross over to Egypt
 and strike the waves in the sea,

and all the depths of the Nile will dry up.
 The pride of Assyria will be thrown down
 and Egypt's scepter taken away.
 I will give them strength in YHWH,
 and they will walk in my name, says YHWH.
 Open your doors, Lebanon,
 for the fire to consume your cedars.
 Mourn, cypresses,
 because the cedars have fallen;
 those with such power have been looted.
 Mourn, oaks in Bashan,
 because the impenetrable forest has been cut down.
 Listen! The shepherds are sobbing;
 their glory has been ruined.
 Listen to the roaring of the young lions;
 Jordan's jungle has been ravaged.

I will restore them because I pity them, since I am the Master, their God.
 Their hearts will find their joy in the Master.

On that day, the Master of Armies will be a crown of glory; a brilliant
 coronet for the remnant of his people; their hearts will find their joy in
 the Master.

Second Reading

A Sermon by St. Augustine

“A virtuous man will find his joy in the Master and put his hope in
 him; the hearts of all the good men will be filled with joy.” We must
 surely have sung these words with our hearts as well as our voices. In
 fact, Christians' tongues express their deepest feelings when they address
 words like this to God. “A virtuous man will find his joy” not in the
 world, but “in the Master. Light has dawned for the virtuous,” Scripture
 says in another place, “and joy for people whose hearts are honest.” Were
 you wondering what reason these people have for joy? Here you are told:
 “Virtuous people will find their joy in the Master.” Another text runs,
 “Make the Master your pleasure, and he will give you your heart's
 desires.”

What are we taught to do, then, and what are we given the power to
 do? To find our joy in the Master. But can anyone find joy in what he

cannot see? No, but we have been promised that we will see him. “Now, as long as we are in our bodies, we conduct ourselves by faith, because we are away from the Master.” We are acting from faith, not from sight. When will it be sight? “My friends,” says John, “we are now the children of God; what we will be has not yet been revealed, but we know that when it is revealed, we will be like him, because we will see him as he is.” When this prophesy is fulfilled, then it will be by sight.

That will be the great joy, the supreme joy, in all its fullness. Then we will no longer drink the milk of hope; we will eat the reality itself. Still, even now, before that vision comes to us—or before we come to that vision—we should find our joy in the Master, because it is hardly a small reason for being happy to have a hope that will some day be fulfilled.

And so, since the hope we now have inspires love, “virtuous people find their joy,” as Scripture says, “in the Master”; but because they do not yet see, it immediately goes on to say, and “put their hope in him.”

Yet already we have the firstfruits of the Spirit, and do we not also have other reasons for being joyful? We are drawing closer to the one we love, and not only are we coming near, we even have some slight feeling and taste of the banquet we will one day eagerly eat and drink.

But how can we find our joy in the Master if he is far from us? Pray for God not to be far. If he is, that is your doing. Love, and he will come close; love and he will live inside you. “The Master is close by; do not have any anxiety.” Are you puzzled to know how it is that he will be with you if you love? “God is love.”

“What do you mean by love?” you will ask me. It is what allows us to be loving. What do we love? A good that words cannot describe, a good that is always giving, a good that is the Creator of everything good. Pleasure in the one from whom you have received everything that gives you pleasure. But in that, I do not include sin, because sin is the one thing that you do not receive from him; with that one exception, everything you have comes from him.

The unseen God is somewhere hidden from you; if you want to see God, believe in him even though you cannot see him yet. Walk on in faith, and you will see his face some day.

If faith has not given you comfort along the path of life, you will never enjoy the blessed privilege of seeing him in his kingdom. Walk on

in faith, and you will see his face some day.

Prayer

Dear Father of everything good, please keep us faithful in serving you, because to serve you is our lasting joy. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

Thursday

First Reading

Zechariah 11.4-12.8

This is what was said by my God YHWH: “Shepherd the flock to be slaughtered, because the ones who buy them kill them with impunity, while those who sell them say, ‘YHWH be blessed! I have become rich!’ And I will not spare the inhabitants of the earth any longer,” says YHWH. “Yes, I will hand each of them over into the power of his neighbor, or into the power of his king; they will crush the earth, and I will not release it from their power.”

So I became the shepherd of the flock to be slaughtered for the sheep merchants. I took two staves, one of which I called “Favor,” and the other, “Chains,” and I fed the flock. In a single month, I did away with the three shepherds; I grew tired of them, and they behaved badly toward me. “I will not feed you,” I said. “If something is dying, let it die; what is being ruined is to be left to ruin, and leave those who are left to eat the meat of each others’ bodies.”

Then I took my staff “Favor” and snapped it in two, breaking off the Treaty which I had made with all the peoples; it was broken off on that day. The sheep merchants who were watching me understood that this was a message from YHWH. I told them, “If it seems good to you, give me my wages; but if not, let it go.” And they counted out my wages, thirty pieces of silver. But YHWH told me, “Throw into the treasury the handsome price they gave for me.” So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the treasury in YHWH’s house.

Then I snapped my other staff “Chains” in two, breaking off the bond of brotherhood between Judah and Israel. YHWH told me, “This time take the gear of a foolish shepherd, because I will bring forward a

shepherd in the land who will pay no attention to those who are being destroyed or look for strays or heal the injured or feed what survives; he will eat the meat of the fat ones and tear off their hooves.

The foolish shepherd

who abandons my flock is doomed!

Have a sword fall on his arm

and on his right eye;

let his arm wither up completely

and his right eye be blind forever.”

A prophesy; YHWH’s message about Israel: This is what is said by YHWH, who spreads out the heavens, lays the foundations of the earth, and forms the spirit of a man within him:

“Now I will make Israel a wine-bowl to stupefy all the peoples around it. Judah will be besieged, and Jerusalem too. On that day, I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all peoples. Everyone who tries to lift it will do himself severe injury; and all the nations of the earth will gather against it. On that day,” says YHWH, “I will strike terror into every horse and madness into its rider. I will strike blind all the peoples’ horses, but I will open my eyes on the house of Judah and the authorities in Judah will say to themselves, ‘Those who live in Jerusalem have their strength in their God YHWH, commander of armies.’

“On that day, I will make the authorities in Judah like a brazier full of fire in the woods, and like a burning torch among sheaves, and they will consume all the surrounding peoples to the right and left; but Jerusalem will remain on its own site. YHWH will save the tents of Judah first, so that the reputation of the house of David and the reputation of those who live in Jerusalem will be elevated over Judah.”

On that day, YHWH will shield those who live in Jerusalem, and the feeble among them will be like David on that day, and the house of David like gods, like one of YHWH’s angels in front of them.

They counted out my wages, thirty pieces of silver, the noble price at which they valued me.

Judas said, “What will you give me if I hand him over to you?” They decided to pay him thirty pieces of silver, the noble price at which they valued me.

*Second Reading**A Commentary on the Song of Songs
by St. Gregory of Nyssa*

Where do you put your sheep to pasture, good Shepherd, carrying on your shoulders the whole flock? Actually, it is only one sheep, this entire human race you lift onto your shoulders. Show me, please, the place where there are green pastures; let me know the calm pond; lead me out to nourishing grass; and call me by name, so that I can hear your voice, because I am your own sheep. And through that voice calling me, please give me eternal life.

“Tell me, one my soul loves.” This is how I address you, because your real name is above all other names; it is unutterable and incomprehensible to all rational creatures. And so the name I use for you is simply the statement of my soul’s love for you, and this is an apt name for making your goodness known. Even though I am very dark, how could I not love you when you loved me so much that you gave up your life for the sheep you are tending? No greater love than this can be conceived, than that you would buy my rescue at the cost of your own life.

Then please show me, says the bride, where you tend your sheep, so that I can find the saving pasture and be filled with heavenly nourishment; because anyone who does not eat this food cannot enter eternal life. Have me run to you, the spring, and drink the divine drink that you make gush out for the thirsty, where you offer water from your side opened by the spear. Whoever drinks from this becomes “a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.”

If you feed me in this way, then you will be sure to make me lie down “at noon,” and I will at once “sleep in peace,” as I rest in a light that knows no shadow. There is, in fact, no shadow at noon, because the sun shines directly over the zenith where you have those you tend lie down and take your children with you to your bed. No one is considered fit to have this noonday rest unless he is a child of light and of the day. But if anyone makes himself equally distant from the shadows of dawn and those of dusk—in other words, from the source of evil and its consequence—the sun of virtue makes him lie down at noon.

Show me, please, then says the bride, how I am to lie down; show me the path to this noonday rest, or my ignorance of your truth may cause me to stray from your good guidance and fraternize with flocks that are strangers to you.

This is the way the bride speaks, since she is anxious about the beauty God has given her, and wants to learn how her attractiveness can continue forever.

I believe that I will see the Master's goodness in the land of the living. I ask one thing from the Master, and this is what I am looking for: to live in the Master's house all the days of my life.

That is, to me, life is the Prince, and death is a gain. I ask one thing from the Master, and this is what I am looking for: to live in the Master's house all the days of my life.

Prayer

Dear Father of everything good, please keep us faithful in serving you, because to serve you is our lasting joy. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

Zechariah 12.9-12, 13.1-9

This is what is said by YHWH: “On that day, I will bring about the destruction of all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

“I will pour over the house of David and over those who live in Jerusalem a spirit of favor and requesting; and they will look upon the one they have pierced, and will grieve for him in the way a man grieves for his only son, and they will mourn him in the way a man mourns his firstborn.

“On that day, the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo; and the land will grieve, each family separately.

“On that day, a fountain will open up to the house of David and those who live in Jerusalem, to purify them from sin and uncleanness. On that day,” says YHWH, commander of armies, “I will destroy the names of idols from the land, so that they will be mentioned no longer; I will also take the prophets and the spirit of uncleanness away from the land. If a man still prophesies, his parents—his father and mother—will say to

him, 'You are not to live, because you have spoken a lie in YHWH's name.' When his prophecies, his parents—his father and mother—will thrust him through.

"On that day, every prophet will be ashamed to prophesy his vision, and will not take up a mantle of hair to mislead, and will say, 'I am no prophet, I am a tiller of the soil, because I have owned land since I was young.' And if anyone asks him, 'What are these wounds on your chest?' he will answer, 'I was wounded with these in the house of those I love.'

Wake, sword, against my shepherd;
 against the man who is my associate,"
 says YHWH, commander of armies

"Strike the shepherd
 so that the sheep will scatter,
 and I will turn the battle against the little ones.

In all the land," says YHWH,
 "two thirds will be cut off and die,
 and one third will be left.

I will bring the third through fire,
 and I will refine them in the way silver is refined,
 and test them as gold is tested.

They will call upon my name,
 and I will listen to them.

I will say, 'They are my people,'
 and they will say, 'YHWH is my God.'"

Tonight, your faith in me will be shaken, because Scripture says, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep in the flock will be scattered.

"Wake, sword, and strike my shepherd, the man who is my companion," says the Master. "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep in the flock will be scattered."

Second Reading A Treatise on the Kingdom of Jesus by St. John Eudes

We must work hard to follow and fulfill in ourselves the various stages of the Prince's plan as well as his mysteries, and frequently beg him to bring them to completion in us and the whole Church, because the mysteries of Jesus are not yet totally complete and fulfilled. They are, of course, complete in the person of Jesus, but not in us, the parts of his

body, nor in the Church, which is his mystical body. The Son of God wishes to give us a share in his mysteries and somehow extend them to us; he wishes to continue them in us and in his universal Church. This is brought about first through the graces he has resolved to impart to us and then through the actions he wishes to accomplish in us through these mysteries. This is his plan for fulfilling his mysteries in us.

For this reason, St. Paul says that the Prince is being brought to fulfillment in his Church, and that all of us contribute to this fulfillment, and in this way he achieves the fullness of life: that is, the mystical stature he has in his mystical body, which will reach completion only on judgment day. In another place, Paul says, "I complete in my own body what has been left out of the sufferings of the Prince."

This is the plan by which the Son of God completes and fulfills in us all the various stages and mysteries. He desires us to finish off the mystery of his incarnation and birth by forming himself in us and being reborn in our souls through the blessed sacraments of the Bath and the Eucharist. He fulfills his hidden life in us, since we are hidden with him in God.

He intends to complete the mysteries of his suffering, death, and return to life by causing us to suffer, die, and return to life again with him and in him. Finally, he wishes to fulfill in us the state of his glorious, immortal life when he causes us to live a glorious, eternal life with him and in him in heaven.

In the same way, he would complete and fulfill in us and in his Church his other stages and mysteries. He wants to give us a share in them and accomplish and continue them in us. This is why the mysteries of the Prince will not be completed until the end of time, because he has arranged for the completion of his mysteries in us and in the Church to be achieved only at the end of time.

I am glad about my sufferings; I am doing all I can in my body to fill up what has still to be endured by the Prince for the sake of his body, the Church.

This is why I struggle and keep going, with the power of the Prince working within me to make me strong. I am doing all I can in my body to fill up what has still to be endured by the Prince for the sake of his body, the Church.

Prayer

Dear Father of everything good, please keep us faithful in serving you, because to serve you is our lasting joy. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

SATURDAY

First Reading

Zechariah 14.1-21

This is what is said by YHWH: “Yes, a day will come for YHWH when the spoils will be divided among you; and I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem for the battle; the city will be taken, houses looted, and women raped; half of the city will be exiled, but the rest of the people will not be taken out of the city.”

Then YHWH will go out and fight against these nations, as if he were fighting on a day of battle; that day, his feet will rest on the Mount of Olives, which is opposite Jerusalem to the east. The Mount of Olives will be split in two from west to east by a very deep valley, and half of the mountain will move north and half south. And the valley of YHWH’s mountain will fill up when the valley of those two mountains reaches its edge; it will fill us as it was filled by the earthquake in the days of King Uzziah of Judah. Then YHWH, my God, will come, along with all his sacred people.

On that day, there will no longer be cold or frost; there will be one continuous day, known to YHWH, not day and night, because there will be light when evening comes. On that day, running water will flow from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea and half to the western sea, and this will be true both in summer and winter. YHWH will become king over the whole earth; on that day, YHWH will be the only one, and his name the only one.

And from Geba to Rimmon in the Negeb, all the land will turn into a plain; but Jerusalem will remain elevated in its place. From the Gate of Benjamin to the place of the First Gate, to the Corner Gate; and from the Tower of Hananel to the king’s wine presses they will occupy it. Never again will it be doomed; Jerusalem will continue in security.

And this will be the torment with which YHWH will strike all the nations that have fought against Jerusalem: their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths.

On that day, there will be a great chaos among them from YHWH; every man will seize the hand of his neighbor, and each one's hand will be raised against that of his neighbor. Judah will also fight against Jerusalem. The riches of all the surrounding nations—their gold, silver, and clothing—will be collected in great profusion.

The torment of the horses, mules, camels, donkeys, and beasts in those camps will be like this torment.

Everyone who is left of all the nations that came against Jerusalem will come up year after year to worship the King, YHWH, commander of armies, and to celebrate the Feast of Tents.

If any of the families on earth does not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, YHWH, commander of armies, no rain will fall on them. And if the family of Egypt does not come up or enter, the torment which YHWH will inflict on all the nations that do not come up to celebrate the Feast of Tents will fall upon them.

On that day, “Sacred to YHWH” will be on the horses' bells; the pots in YHWH's house will be like libation bowls before the altar, and every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be sacred to YHWH, commander of armies; and everyone who comes to sacrifice will take them and cook in them. On that day, there will no longer be any merchant in the house of YHWH, commander of armies.

On that day, running water will flow from Jerusalem, and a fountain spring up for the house of David to wash off our sins.

One of the soldiers pierced the side of Jesus with a lance, and immediately blood and water flowed out to wash off our sins.

Second Reading

A Conference by St. Thomas Aquinas

It is fitting for the end of all our desires, eternal life, to coincide with the words at the end of the creed: “Eternal life. Amen.”

The first point about eternal life is that man is united with God; because God himself is the reward and purpose of all our work. “I am your protector and your supreme reward.” This union consists in seeing

perfectly: “At present we are looking at a dim reflection in a mirror, but then we will see face to face.”

Next, it consists in perfect praise, as in the words of the prophet, “Joy and happiness will be found in it; gratitude and words of praise.”

It also consists in the complete satisfaction of desire, because there the blessed will be given more than they wanted or hoped for. The reason is that in this life, no one can fulfill his longing, nor can any creature satisfy man’s desire. Only God satisfies it, and he infinitely exceeds all other pleasures. This is why man can rest in nothing but God. As Augustine says, “You have made us for yourself, Master, and our hearts can find no rest until they rest in you.”

Since in their heavenly home, the saints will possess God completely, obviously their longing will be satisfied, and their glory will be even greater. That is why the Master says, “Enter your Master’s joy.” Augustine adds, “The fullness of joy will not enter those who experience joy; those who experience joy will enter joy. I will be satisfied when your glory is seen,” and again, “The one who satisfies your desire with what is good.”

Whatever gives pleasure is there in superabundance; if one is looking for pleasure, there is supreme and absolutely perfect pleasure. It is said of God, the supreme good, “Boundless pleasures are in your right hand.”

Again, eternal life consists in the joyous community of all the blessed, a community of supreme delight, since everyone will share all that is good with all the blessed. Everyone will love everyone else as much as himself, and therefore will be as happy in others’ good as in his own. So it follows that the happiness and joy of each person grows in proportion to the joy of all of them.

I will look on your face in virtue, my Master, and when I awaken, I will take my pleasure in seeing you.

My knowledge now is imperfect; then it will be as perfect as God’s knowledge of me.

Prayer

Dear Father of everything good, please keep us faithful in serving you, because to serve you is our lasting joy. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



Start the Jews

196 THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME

First Reading *Revelation 1.4-6, 10, 12-18, 2.26, 28, 3.5, 12-21*

Blessings on you and peace from he who is, who was, and who is coming₃, and from the seven spirits₂₄ before his throne₄₅, and from Prince₇ Jesus_{14[3]}, the faithful witness₅, the firstborn of the dead₁₃, and the ruler of the kings₂₁ of the earth₈₀.

To the one who loves us and releases us from our sins₃ in his blood₁₉, and who has made us a kingdom₉—priests₃ of God₉₆ and his Father₅—be glory₁₇ and might for ages₂₈ upon ages₂₈. Amen₉.

I was in the spirit₂₄ on the Master₂₄'s day₂₁, and I heard behind me a voice₅₅ great as a trumpet₆. I turned to see the voice₅₅ that spoke to me, and when I turned, I saw seven golden lampstands₇, and among₈ the lampstands₇ someone like a son₈ of man₂₅ dressed in a foot-length robe and belted across his chest with a golden sash; his head₁₉ and hair₃ were white as wool as white as snow; his eyes₁₀ were like a flame₃ of fire₂₆, and his feet₁₁ like burnished bronze, glowing as if in a furnace; and his voice₅₅ was like the sound₅₅ of rushing water₁₈.

In his right₉ hand₁₆ he had he had seven stars₁₄, and from his mouth₂₁ issued a keen two-edged sword₆; the sight of him was like the sun₁₃ shining with all its power₁₂.

When I saw him, I fell at his feet₁₁ like a dead man₁₃. He placed his right₉ hand upon me, and said, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last₃, the one who is alive₇; I was dead₁₃, and now I am alive₇ for ages₂₈ upon ages₂₈, and I have the keys₄ of death₁₉ and the land of the dead₄.

"To the one who wins the battle₉ and who keeps to the end₃ my deeds₂₀ I will give authority₂₁ over the nations₂₄, and he will shepherd them with a staff₄ of iron and shatter them like jars₃ of clay, just as I received this from my Father₅; and I will give him the morning star₁₄; and I will not erase his name₃₈ from the scroll₃ of life₁₆, and will acknowledge his name₃₈ before my Father₅ and before his angels₆₆.

"I will make of the one who wins the battle₉ a column in the temple₁₆ of my God₉₆, and he will go outside no more; and I will write upon him the name₃₈ of my God₉₆ and the name₃₈ of the city₂₇ of my God₉₆, the new Jerusalem₃ which is coming down from heaven₅₄ from my God₉₆; and I will write my new name₃₈.

"I am now standing at the door₄ and knocking; if anyone hears the sound₅₅ I make and opens the door₄, I will come to visit him and dine with him, and he will dine with me.

“I will give the one who wins the battle, the right to sit with me upon my throne₄₅, just as I won my battle and took my seat with my Father₅ upon his throne₄₅.”

They will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with great power and majesty; then he will send out his angels and gather his chosen from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the farthest limits of heaven.

He will judge the world with justice and the peoples with truth; and gather his chosen from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the farthest limits of heaven.

Second Reading

A Notebook on Prayer by Origen

“God’s kingdom,” in the words of our Master and Savior, “does not come for everyone to see; and people will not be saying, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘See, there it is!’ The kingdom of God is inside us, because what God says is very near, in our mouths and in our hearts.” In this sense, it is clear that a person who prays for the coming of God’s kingdom is properly praying to have it inside himself, so that it will grow there and bear fruit and become complete. That is, God is ruling in each of his sacred people; anyone who is holy obeys the spiritual laws of God, who is living in him as if he were a well-regulated city. The Father is present in a perfect soul, and the Prince is ruling with him, as he says, “We will come to him and make our home with him.”

And so, as we continue to make progress, the kingdom of God inside us will reach its highest point when the Emissary’s words are fulfilled, and after the Prince has made all his enemies his subjects, he will hand over his “kingdom to God the Father, so that God will be everything in everyone.” Therefore, we should pray constantly with the disposition of the soul which the Word should make divine, as he says to our Father in heaven, “May your name be held in reverence; come to us and rule over us.”

Note this too about God’s kingdom. It is not a “sharing of virtue and vice, or a coexistence of light and darkness, or a meeting of the Prince and Belial.” The kingdom of God cannot exist alongside the reign of sin.

And so, if we want God to rule inside us, “sin” should “in no way

198 THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME

have control over our mortal bodies”; we should “kill off the parts of our bodies which are on earth” and bear fruit in the Spirit. There should be in us a kind of spiritual paradise for God to walk in and be the only ruler with his Prince. The Master will sit at the right of that spiritual power in us which we wish to receive; and he will sit there until all his enemies with us become “his footstool,” and every authority, power, and potency in us is thrown out.

All this can happen in each of us; and the last enemy, death, can be destroyed; and then the Prince will say in us, “Where is your sting? Land of the dead, where is your victory?” And so what is “corruptible” in us must be dressed in holiness and “incorruptibility”; and what is “mortal” must dress itself, now that death has been conquered, in the Father’s “immortality.” Then God will reign in us, and we will enjoy even now the blessings of rebirth and return to life.

The kingdom of this world belongs to our Master and his Prince, and he will reign through all the ages of ages.

All the families of nations will bow down before him, because the Master is our king, and he will reign through all the ages of ages.

Prayer

Omnipotent, merciful God, since you have broken the power of evil and made everything new in your Son Prince Jesus, the King of the Universe, may everyone in heaven and earth acknowledge your glory and never cease to praise you. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

2 Peter 1.1-11

Simon Rock, a slave and Emissary of Prince Jesus, to those blessed with a faith equal in value with ours in the virtue of our God and of our savior Prince Jesus:

May you be full of blessings and peace in the knowledge of God and

of our Master Jesus.

In the same way as everything that leads to life and reverence has been given us by the divine Power, it is through the knowledge of the one who called us by his own glory and high character—by which the priceless, magnificent promises were given to us—that you will become participants in the divine nature and escape from ruin in the world in its passions.

Supplement this with complete zeal, and so add integrity to your faith, knowledge to your integrity, temperance to your knowledge, steadfastness to your temperance, reverence to your steadfastness, brotherly affection to your reverence, and love to your brotherly affection. If these characteristics exist and proliferate in you, you will not remain barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Master Prince Jesus; because a person who does not possess them is blind and groping his way, forgetting that he has received a cleansing from his former sins.

For this reason, brothers and sisters, be even more eager to make your calling and selection stable, since if you do this, you will never fall; and in this way rich provision will be made for you in giving you entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Master and savior Prince Jesus.

The Master has called you to his own glory and power, and he has given you all the supremely great, valuable things he had promised, so that you would become sharers of the divine nature.

All of you who have been bathed into the Prince have put on the livery of the Prince so that you would become sharers of the divine nature.

Second Reading

A Sermon by St. Leo the Great

The Master says, “Unless you have greater virtue than the Law experts and Pharisees, you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven.” But how can your virtue go beyond them unless “sympathy rises above calculation?” What is as right or fitting as a creature fashioned in the image and likeness of God and imitating his Creator, who brought about the repair of the damage done and the sanctification of believers by removing their sins? With strict retribution removed and the ending of all punishment, guilty men were restored to innocence, and the end of vice became the beginning of virtue. Can anything be more virtuous than

200 THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME

this?

This is how Christian virtue can go beyond that of the Law experts and Pharisees, by rejecting earthly wisdom, not canceling out the Law. This is why, in giving his students a rule for fasting, the Master said, "Whenever you fast, do not be gloomy about it like hypocrites; they suck in their cheeks to look as if they are fasting. Amen I tell you, they have received their reward." What reward is this but human praise? A desire like this often puts on a mask of virtue, because where there is no concern for conscience, an untruthful reputation gives pleasure. The result is that concealed immorality enjoys a false reputation.

It is enough for a man who loves God to please the one he loves; and there is no greater reward to be looked for than the loving itself; because love comes from God by the very fact that God is himself love. A good, chaste soul is so happy to be filled with him that it wants to take its pleasure in nothing else; because what the Master says is very true: "Your heart will be where what you value is stored." What is this storehouse of what is valuable but the amassing of profits and the results of his labor? "Because whatever a man plants is what he will reap," and each man's profit matches his work; and the heart's pleasure is attached to the place where pleasure and delight is found. But there are many kinds of wealth and a variety of grounds for being happy; every man's storehouse of valuables is what he desires. But if it is based on earthly ambitions, its acquisition makes a man miserable, not happy.

But those who enjoy what is above and eternal rather than earthly and destructible possess the incorruptible, hidden storehouse the prophet speaks of: "Our valuables and rescue have come: wisdom, education, and respect from the Master; these are the valuables that belong to virtue." Through these things, with the help of God's grace, even earthly possessions are transformed into heavenly blessings; it is a fact that many people use the wealth which is either left to them by right or otherwise acquired as a tool of devotion. By distributing what might be superfluous to support the poor, they are amassing imperishable riches, so that what they have discreetly given cannot be subject to loss. They have properly placed those riches where their heart is; it is a true blessing to work to increase riches like these rather than to be afraid that they are going to disappear.

We must never grow tired of doing good; if we continue to struggle on, we will reap our harvest at the proper time. And so, while we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone.

A man will reap what he has planted. And so, while we have the opportunity, we should do good to everyone.

Prayer

Dear Master, please increase our eagerness to do your will and help us know the saving power of your love. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

2 Peter 1.12-21

This is why it is my intention always to remind you of this, though you know it and it forms the foundation of the truth present to you. But I consider it only right, as long as I still live in this tent of mine, to keep your memory awake—since I am aware that the time for me to strike camp is soon, as our Master Prince Jesus made clear to me; I am anxious to have you able at any time after my departure to call it to mind.

You see, we were not retelling “meaningful” legends when we informed you about the power and presence of our Master Prince Jesus; we saw his magnificence with our own eyes. When, for instance, he had taken on himself from God the Father honor and glory, and the voice reverberated down to him from the glory of the Grandiloquent, “This is my Son, the one I love, in whom I am pleased,” we heard this voice resound out of the sky while we were with him on the holy mountain.

So we possess more than solidly the prophetic utterances, which you would do well to make your own to be a lamp shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Above all be aware of the fact that no prophetic writing is a matter of personal interpretation; no prophesy ever came from the choice of a human being; it always comes from a person’s being led by the Holy Spirit to speak from God.

202 THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME

The Word became flesh and made his home among us, and we have seen how great he is, with a greatness that belongs to the only Son God ever fathered.

We witnessed with our own eyes his sovereign majesty when we were there with him on the holy mountains, and we have seen how great he is, with a greatness that belongs to the only Son God ever fathered.

Second Reading

A Treatise on John by St. Augustine

We Christians are the light, at least by comparison with unbelievers. And so the Emissary says, "Once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Master; so behave like children of the light." And in another place, he says, "The night is almost gone, and the day is coming close. And so we should put away what is done in darkness and put on the armor of light; we should conduct ourselves honestly, as we would during the day."

Nevertheless, since the days in which we are now living are still dark compared with the light we will see, listen to what the Emissary Peter says. He speaks of a voice that came from the Supreme Glory and said to the Master Prince, "You are my Son, the one I love; I am completely satisfied with you. We heard this voice," he says, "coming from heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain."

Because we were not present there ourselves and did not hear that voice from heaven, Peter tells us, "And we possess a surer prophetic utterance to which you would do well to pay attention, like a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts."

And so when our Master Prince Jesus comes, and as the Emissary Paul says, "brings to light what is hidden in darkness and reveals the heart's secrets, so that everyone will receive his approval from God," lamps will no longer be needed. When that day comes, the prophet will not be read to us, we will not need John's testimony, we will have no need of the Good News itself; and so all the Scriptures which burned like lamps for us not to stay in darkness will be taken away from us.

When all this is removed as no longer necessary for our illumination, and when the men of God by whom they were provided to us will, along with us, see the true, beloved light for themselves without such aids, what will we see? What will our minds be fed with? What will give joy to

our sight? What will be the source of that happiness “which no eye has seen, or ear heard, and which has not be conceived by the heart of man?” What will we see?

I beg you to love along with me and in faith run along with me; let us yearn after our heavenly country, let us sob in longing for our heavenly home; let us really feel that we are foreigners here. The Good News should be telling us, “In the beginning, there was the Word, and the Word was face to face with God, and the Word was God.” You will come to the spring whose drops have already showered you.

Instead of the ray of light that was sent through slanting, winding paths into the heart of your darkness, you will see the light itself in all its purity and brightness. It is to see and experience this light that you are now being washed clean. “My very dear friends,” says John himself, “we are the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we will be; but we know that when he appears, we will be like him because we will see him as he is.”

I feel that your spirits are being lifted up with mine to the heavens above us; but “the corruptible body weighs down the soul, and this earthly tent burdens the mind in its thinking.” I am about to lay aside this book, and you are soon going away, each to his own business. It has been good for us to share the light we have in common, it is good for us to have enjoyed ourselves, and good to have been happy together. When we leave each other, let us not leave him.

There will be no more night, and they will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, because the Master God will be their light, and they will be kings through ages of ages.

They will see him face to face and carry his name on their foreheads, because the Master God will be their light, and they will be kings through ages of ages.

Prayer

Dear Master, please increase our eagerness to do your will and help us know the saving power of your love. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

ednesday

First Reading

2 Peter 2.1-9

There used to be, however, false prophets in the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will insinuate disastrous “selections among the facts,” even to repudiating the owner who purchased them, and will bring on themselves swift ruin. And many people will follow the debauchery with which they malign and disparage the Way of the Truth; and in their greed they will make money out of you by their deceptive theories; but the verdict against them has not been delayed for long, and the executioner of their sentence has not fallen asleep.

Remember, if God did not spare the angels who sinned and threw them into pits of gloom to be kept until the Judgment, if he did not spare the ancient world and only preserved the eighth man, Noah, virtue’s herald, when he brought a flood on the world full of irreverent people, if he sentenced the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to be reduced to ashes as an example against future irreverence and saved virtuous Lot, who was distraught by the disgusting behavior of those depraved people—the good man tormented his noble soul as he lived among them with seeing and hearing day after day their immoral acts—then the Master knows how to preserve reverent people from trouble and to keep vicious ones in anguish until the day of judgment, especially the ones who indulge their flesh in filthy desires and despise people in authority.

Be careful of false prophets who come to you in sheep’s clothing and underneath are hungry wolves.

Many false prophets will come forward; they will perform great miracles and deceive a number of people, and underneath are hungry wolves.

Second Reading

A Homily attributed to St. Macarius

When God was displeased with the Jews, he handed Jerusalem over to their enemies, and they were conquered by people who hated them; there were no more sacrifices or feasts. When he became angry in the same way at a soul who had violated his commands, God handed him over to his enemies, who corrupted and totally disgraced him. When a

house has no master living in it, it becomes dark, vile, and contemptible, choked with filth and disgusting refuse. The same is true of a soul which has lost its master who used to take his pleasure there with his angels. This soul is dark with sin; its desires are degraded, and it knows nothing but shame.

It is a curse for a path to be not walked on, along which the voices of men are not heard, because then it becomes the haunt of wild animals. It is a curse for a soul in the Master does not walk inside it to expel with his voice the spiritual beasts of sin. It is a curse to be a house where no master has his home, to be a field in which no farmer works, or to be a pilotless ship, storm-tossed and sinking. It is a curse to be a soul without the Prince as its real pilot; it drifts about in darkness, slapped by the waves of emotions, storm-tossed at the mercy of evil spirits; its end is ruin. It is a curse to be a soul that does not have the Prince to cultivate it with care to produce the good harvest of the Holy Spirit; if it is left to itself, it is choked with thorns and thistles; instead of a crop, it produces only what is fit for burning. It is a curse to be a soul that does not have the Prince living in it; it is deserted and foul with the filth of the emotions, and becomes a haven for all the vices.

When a farmer prepares to till the soil, he must put on clothing and use tools that are appropriate. In the same way, the Prince, our heavenly king, came to till the soil of mankind devastated by sin. He took on a body and, using the cross as his plowshare, cultivated the barren soul of man. He removed the thorns and thistles which are the evil spirits and pulled up the weeds of sin. He threw the straw of immorality into the fire; and when he had plowed the soul with the wood of the cross, he planted in it a supremely lovely garden of the Spirit, which would produce for its Master and God the sweetest and tastiest fruit of every kind.

What I really am is a vine, and you are the branches; anyone who lives in me and I in him produces a great deal of fruit.

I have loved you in the same way as the Father has loved me; anyone who lives in me and I in him produces a great deal of fruit.

Prayer

Dear Master, please increase our eagerness to do your will and help us

206 THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME

know the saving power of your love. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

2 Peter 9-22

The Master knows how to preserve reverent people from trouble and to keep vicious ones in anguish until the day of judgment, especially the ones who indulge their flesh in filthy desires and despise people in authority.

Arrogant and conceited, they are not afraid even to malign the Spiritual Powers, while angels, who are greater in strength and power than they, do not make disparaging remarks about them to the Master. But they, like unthinking animals with natures born only for death and decay, cast aspersions on things they are ignorant of, and will be destroyed in the same destruction with them, and be harmed in return for the harm they have done. They think pleasure consists in daytime drinking-bouts; they soil and stain with their dissipation the meals they have with you; their eyes are full of lust, insatiable for sin, and they tempt insecure souls away; their hearts are schooled in greed, these children under a curse, and they have wandered off out of the straight road onto the path of Balaam son of Beor, who loved the profits vice brings, but got the reprimand he deserved for his crime: a dumb ass spoke with a man's voice and forbade the prophet's madness.

All these people are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm, and the gloom of darkness is waiting for them. They tempt into sexual wantonness with their pompous, empty claims the people who have only just escaped from a life of error, and promise them freedom, when in fact they are slaves to decay—because what has control over a person makes him its slave. That is, if people are tangled over again and overcome by the taint of the world once they have escaped from it by the knowledge of our Master and savior Prince Jesus, their last condition is worse than the first. It would have been better for them not to have known the Way of virtue than, once having known it, to turn away from the holy commandments that were given them. What happened to them is what

the proverb says, “A dog goes back to its vomit,” and “a washed pig bathes by wallowing in the mud.”

There are a great many things that are true, honorable, and virtuous, and many that are pure; think about them. You must do this, and the God of peace will be with you.

Be on your guard, stand firm in faith, be brave and strong. You must do this, and the God of peace will be with you.

Second Reading *A Homily on Matthew by St. John Chrysostom*

As long as we are sheep, we win the battle, and even if we are surrounded by too many wolves to count, we come out victorious; but if we turn into wolves, we are beaten, because we lose the shepherd’s help. After all, he feeds the sheep, not the wolves, and will abandon you if you do not let him show his power in you.

What he says is this: “Do not be upset that, as I send you out among the wolves, I ask you to be like sheep and doves. I could have managed things quite differently, and sent you to be fiercer than lions rather than suffering harm and yielding like sheep to the wolves. But the way I have chosen is right; it will bring you greater praise, and at the same time reveal my power.” That is what he told Paul: “My grace is enough for you, because it is in weakness that my power becomes complete.” He says, “I intend to deal in the same way with you.” Because when he says, “I am sending you out like sheep,” he implies, “But do not lose heart at this, because I know—I am certain—that no one will be able to win over you.”

The Master, however, does want them to contribute something, to prevent everything from seeming to be the work of grace, and them from seeming to win their reward without deserving it. And so he adds, “You must be clever as snakes and innocent as doves.”

“But,” they may object, “what good is our cleverness among so many dangers? How can we be clever when we are bounced around by so many waves? No matter how clever the sheep is as he stands among the wolves—so many wolves!—what good can the cleverness do? No matter how great is the innocence of the dove, what use is it with so many hawks swooping down on him?”

My answer to all this is, cleverness and innocence admittedly do these

208 THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME

irrational creatures no good; but they can be a great help to you. What cleverness is the Master asking for here? The cleverness of a snake. A snake will give up everything and will put up no great resistance even if its body is being cut into pieces, provided it can save its head. And so you, the Master is saying, must surrender everything but your faith: money, body, even life itself—because faith is the head and the root; keep that, and even if you lose everything else, you will get it back in abundance.

And so the Master advised the students not simply to be clever or innocent; he joined the two qualities so that they become a genuine virtue. He insisted on the cleverness of the snake so that deadly wounds could be avoided, and he insisted on the innocence of the dove so that revenge would not be taken on those who injure or lay traps for you. Cleverness is useless without innocence.

Do not believe that this regulation is beyond your power. More than anyone else, the Master knows the true natures of created things; he knows that self-control, not a fierce defense, beats back a fierce attack.

“You see, I am sending you out like sheep among wolves,” says the Master. “Be as cunning as serpents and as innocent as doves.”

“While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you will be children of the light. Be as cunning as serpents and as innocent as doves.”

Prayer

Dear Master, please increase our eagerness to do your will and help us know the saving power of your love. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

2 Peter 3.1-8

My friends, this letter I am now writing to you is my second; in both of them I have tried to waken memories in your vulnerable minds, and call again to your attention the holy prophets' predictions and the

commandments of the Master and Savior that came through his Emissaries first of all, to have you realize that during the final age, cynics will come along with their ridicule and say, motivated by their own desires, “Where is the promise of his being with you? From the time ‘the fathers fell asleep’ everything has stayed just as it was from the beginning of creation.” They choose not to notice that a sky existed from time immemorial and an earth too, which was formed out of water and by water from God’s pronouncement—by which the world that then existed was destroyed by being deluged with water; and the present heavens and earth are by the same pronouncement stored up for fire, and kept for the day of judgment and the doom of irreligious people.

And do not let this escape your notice, friends: that for the Master, one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are the same as one day. The Master is not wasting time keeping his promise, as some people accuse him of wasting his time; he is showing patience toward you, since his will is not for some to be destroyed; it is for everyone to move toward a change of thinking.

But the Master’s day will come like a thief, the day when the sky will vanish with a roar, the elements will melt in fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be discovered. And since everything is going to disintegrate in this way, what kind of people should you be? You should be waiting with saintly and reverent conduct, eager for the presence of God’s day on which the sky will take fire and disintegrate and the elements will burn and melt. We are expecting from his promise a “new sky and a new earth” in which the virtuous people will dwell.

For this reason, friends, because you have this expectation, aspire to have him find you spotless and unstained, and at peace; and consider that your rescue consists in our Master’s patience, as the brother we love Paul wrote you from the wisdom that was given him.

He has done the same in all his letters, and spoken of this; though in them there are some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and insecure people twist to their ruin, just as they do with the rest of what has been written. But since you are forewarned of this, friends, be careful not to be carried away by the meanderings of people without roots and lose your own foundation; keep growing in the favor and knowledge of our Master and savior Prince Jesus.

Glory to him now and on the day of eternity. Amen.

210 THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME

I will create a new heaven and a new earth, and you will be happy forever in my creation. Now I will make everything new.

I will create Jerusalem to be a joy and the people to be a pleasure. Now I will make everything new.

Second Reading *A Sermon on Man's Mortality by St. Cyprian*

Our obligation is to do God's will, and not our own. We must remember this if the prayer that our Master commanded us to say every day is to have any meaning on our lips. It is supremely unreasonable to pray to have God's will done, and then not promptly obey it when he calls us from this world. And yet we struggle and resist like self-willed slaves, and are brought into the Master's presence with suffering and wailing, not freely consenting to our departure, but forced by necessity.

And yet we expect to be rewarded with heavenly honors by the one we come to against our will! Then why are we praying for the kingdom of heaven to come if this earthly bondage is what we like? What is the point of praying so often for its early arrival if we would rather be slaves of the devil here than kings with the Prince?

The world hates Christians, so why give your love to it instead of following the Prince, who loves you and has redeemed you? John is very insistent in his letter when he tells us not to love the world by yielding to sensual desires. "Never give your love to the world," he warns, "or to anything in it. A man cannot love the Father and love the world at the same time. All that the world offers is fleshly desires, greed in the eyes, and earthly ambition; the world and its temptations will cease to exist, but the man who has done the will of God will live forever." Our part, my dear brothers and sisters, is to be single-minded, firm in faith, and steadfast in courage, ready for God's will, whatever it happens to be. Get rid of the fear of death and think of the eternal life that follows it; that will show people that we really live our faith.

We ought never to forget, my friends, that we have renounced the world. We are living here now as foreigners, and only for a while. When the day of our homecoming puts an end to our exile, frees us from the bonds of the world, and restores us to paradise and a kingdom, we should welcome it. Is there a man who is stationed in a foreign land who would not want to return to his own country as soon as possible? Well, we think of paradise as our country, and a huge crowd of those who love

us are waiting for us there, a countless throng of parents, bothers, and children are longing for us to join them. Even though they are assured of their own rescue, they are still concerned about ours. What joy it will be both for them and us to see each other and embrace! The delight of that heavenly kingdom where there is no fear of death! The supreme, endless bliss of eternal life!

There we find the glorious band of Emissaries, and there is where the ecstatic gathering of prophets is, there we see the innumerable army of martyrs who were crowned for their glorious victory in the battle and in death. There, in triumph, are the virgins who subdued their emotions by the strength of continence; there is where the merciful, those who fulfilled the commands of virtue by providing for the poor are finding their reward; in obedience to the Master's command, they turned their earthly patrimony into heavenly treasure.

My dear brothers and sisters, all our longing should be to join them as soon as we are permitted. May God see our desire, and may the Prince see this resolve whose source is faith, because he will give the rewards of his love more plentifully to those who have longed for him more fervently.

We are citizens of heaven. From there, we are eagerly waiting for the coming of our Savior, the Master Prince Jesus; he will renew our crass bodies and make them like his glorified body.

When your life the Prince appears, you will also appear with him in glory; he will renew our crass bodies and make them like his glorified body.

Prayer

Dear Master, please increase our eagerness to do your will and help us know the saving power of your love. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

Jude 1-8, 12-13, 17-25

Judas, the slave of Prince Jesus and relative of James, to those loved

212 THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME

in the Father and preserved as his chosen ones for Prince Jesus:

Mercy, peace, and love to you many times over.

My friends, I had every intention of writing to you about the rescue we all participate in, when I realized the need to write an appeal to you to struggle on behalf of the faith which was once for all transmitted to the sacred people. There has been an infiltration by some individuals—predicted in Scripture long ago for this crucial moment—who are irreverent and intent on turning the blessings of God inside out into a license for sex, and denying that Prince Jesus is our only Lord and Master.

I would like to call once again to your attention what at one time you knew perfectly well, that the Master, who in the first place rescued a people from Egypt, in the second place destroyed those who refused to believe; and even the angels who would not stay in their first condition and left their proper homes have been kept imprisoned in gloom, held there by eternal chains until the trial on the Great Day—like Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, who analogously to this practiced casual sex and went after homosexual gratification, and serve as an example by undergoing the sentence of eternal fire.

And these dreamers too defile their bodies in the same way, reject authority, and ridicule beings far above them. These people are a contamination of your banquets of love, as they brazenly feed their faces together and take very good care of themselves; they are clouds without water, blown along by the wind, withered trees in autumn with no fruit, doubly dead, torn up by the roots, ferocious waves in the sea, foaming with their own shame, wandering stars for whom the gloom of eternal darkness is reserved.

My friends, remember the predictions of the Emissaries of our Master Prince Jesus, when they said, “In the final age, there will be insolent people who take their irreverent feelings as their guides.” These are the people who are splitting you apart; they are animals, and have no Spirit. No, my friends, you build yourselves up in your absolutely holy faith, as you pray to the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves safe in the love of God, and look forward to the mercy of our Master Prince Jesus and eternal life. Be kind to those who cannot make up their minds; save others by plucking them out of the fire, and show your kindness to still others with wariness, hating the clothes they have stained with materialism.

Glory, majesty, power, and sovereignty before the ages began, now,

and for all the ages to come to the one who is capable of guarding you from tripping and standing you firmly in joy with no blemish before his radiance, to our only God and Savior, through our Master Prince Jesus. Amen.

We live soberly, virtuously, and reverently in this world as we wait in blessed hope for the glorious coming of our mighty God and Savior Prince Jesus.

We should be concerned with inspiring each other to love and do good deeds, as we wait in blessed hope for the glorious coming of our mighty God and Savior Prince Jesus.

Second Reading

A Sermon by St. Augustine

We should sing “Hallelujah!” here on earth, while we are still living in anxiety, so that we will be able to sing it some day in heaven in full security. Why are we now living in anxiety? Can you expect me not to feel anxious when I read, “Is not man’s time on earth a time of trouble?” Can you expect me not to feel anxious when these words are still ringing in my ears: “Stay awake and pray not to enter the ordeal”? Can you expect me not to feel anxious when there are so many troubles here below that even prayer reminds us of them, when we say, “Please forgive the debts we owe you to the extent we forgive the debts others owe us”? Every day we make our requests; and every day we sin.

Do you want me to feel secure when I am asking pardon for my sins every day, and requesting help in time of trouble? Because of my past sins, I pray, “Please forgive the debts we own you to the extent that we forgive the debts others owe us,” and then because of the dangers still in front of us, I immediately go on to add, “do not lead us into trouble.” How can everything be all right with people who are crying out with me, “Free us from harm”? And yet, my brothers and sisters, while we are still surrounded by this harm, let us sing “Hallelujah!” to the good God who sets us free from harm.

Even here, surrounded by temptations and troubles, every man should sing “Hallelujah!” “God is faithful,” says holy Scripture, “and he will not allow you to have troubles you have not the strength to bear.” So let us sing “Hallelujah!” even here on earth. Man is still a debtor, but God is faithful. Scripture does not say that he will not allow you to have

214 THIRTY-FOURTH WEEK OF ORDINARY TIME

troubles, but that “he will not allow you to have troubles you have not the strength to bear. Whatever the trouble, he will see you through it safely, and enable you to endure it.” You have entered a time of trouble, but you will come to no harm; God’s help will bring you through it safely.

You are like a piece of pottery, shaped by what you are taught, and fired by trouble. And so when you are put into the oven, keep your thoughts on the time when you will be taken out again; because God is faithful, “and he will stand guard over both your coming home and leaving.”

But in the next life, when this body of ours has become immortal and incorruptible, then all troubles will be over. “Your body is in fact dead, and why? Because of sin.” Still, “your spirit is alive, because you have been made virtuous.” Are we to leave our dead bodies behind, then? Not at all. Listen to the words of holy Scripture: “If the Spirit of the one who brought the Prince back to life from the dead is living in you, then the one who brought the Prince back from the dead will also give life to your own mortal bodies.” At the moment, your body is receiving its life from the soul; but then it will receive it from the Spirit.

The happiness of the heavenly “Hallelujah!” sung in security, in fear of no setback! We will have no enemies in heaven, and will never lose a friend. God’s praises are sung both there and here, but here they are sung in anxiety, and there they are sung in security. Here, they are sung by people destined to die, and there by those destined to live forever; here they are sung in hope; there, in hope’s fulfillment; here they are sung by people on a journey, and there, by those living in their own country.

So then, my brothers and sisters, let us sing now, not so that we can live a life of ease, but in order to lighten our labors. You should sing in the way people on a journey do: do not be lazy, but sing to make your travel more enjoyable. Sing, but keep going.

What do I mean by “keep going”? Keep making progress. This progress, however, must be in virtuous; because there are some, as the Emissary warns, whose only progress is in vice. If you make progress, you will be continuing your journey; but be sure that your progress is in virtue, true faith, and right living. Sing, then, but keep going.

Your golden streets, Jerusalem, will sing with happy songs; throughout your length and breadth, one great cry will come from the lips of everyone: Hallelujah!

You will shine in splendor like the sun; all the men on earth will pay you homage. Throughout your length and breadth, one great cry will come from the lips of everyone: Hallelujah!

Prayer

Dear Master, please increase our eagerness to do your will and help us know the saving power of your love. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

