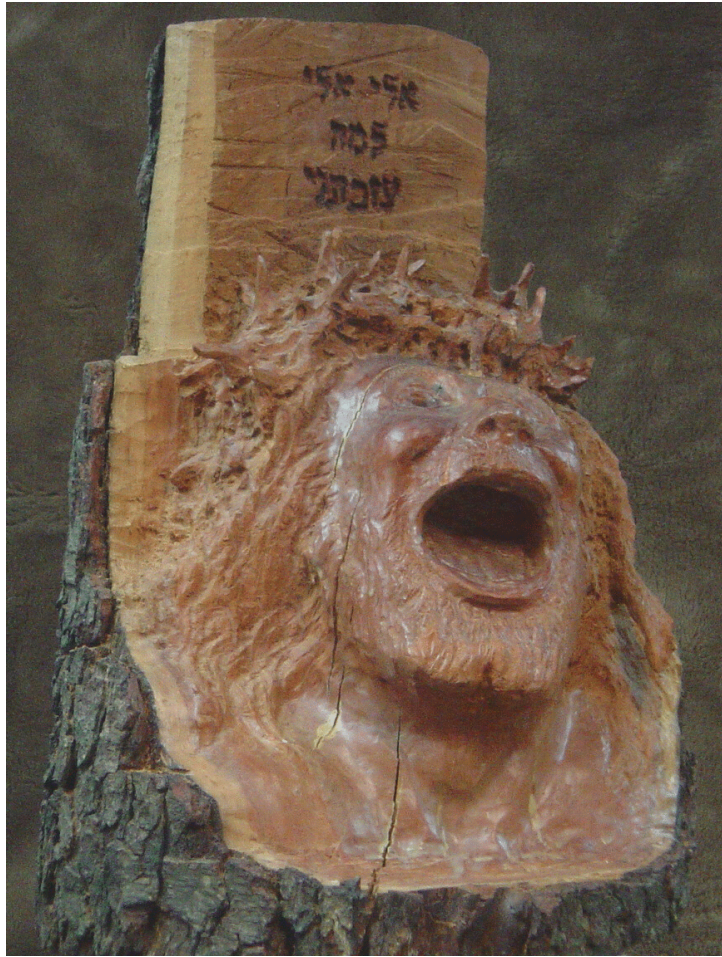


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*First Reading*

This is what is said by Master YHWH:

“Cry out at the top of your voice; do not spare yourself;
 raise your voice to the volume of a trumpet,
 and tell my people what their disobedience is,
 and inform the house of Jacob of their sins.

In spite of them, they search me out every day
 and take pleasure in knowing my ways,
 as if they were a nation that did what is right
 and had not abandoned their God’s commands.

They ask me for the rules for virtue,
 and take pleasure in approaching God.

‘Why have we fasted,’ they say, ‘and you have ignored it?
 Why have we mortified ourselves, if you do not notice it?’

In fact, on your fast day, you do what you please
 and take advantage of all your laborers.

Your fast ends in fights and arguments

Isaiah 58:1-12

and you strike each other down with evil fists.
You are not to fast in this way
if you want to make your voice heard in heaven.
Is this the kind of fasting I wish
or the mortification I am looking for?
Is it to bend your head down as if it were a bulrush
and to lie down in sackcloth and ashes?
Would you call this a fast
and a day that is acceptable to YHWH?
Is not this the kind of fast I choose:
to untie those unjustly bound,
to take off heavy burdens,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break off every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
and bring into your house the evicted poor?
When you see the naked, do you cover them
rather than hide away from your own flesh and blood.
Then your light will break out like the dawn
and your wounds will heal at once;
your virtue will precede you;
and YHWH's glory will take up the rear.
Then you will call, and YHWH will answer;
you will cry out, and he will say, 'I am here.'
If you remove saddles from people's backs
and eliminate accusations and lying speech;
if you reach out your life to the hungry
and satisfy those suffering hardship,
then your light will dawn in the darkness
and your midnight will look like noon.
YHWH will guide you at every moment
and slake your soul during drought;
he will strengthen your bones.
You will be like a watered garden,
like a spring whose water never dries;
your own people
will rebuild the old ruins;

you will raise buildings on foundations from generations past,
and you will be called 'Those who repair the wrecks,
and restore the streets to livability.'"

The Master says, "The kind of fast that pleases me is sharing your food with the hungry and sheltering the poor and homeless. Do this and I will listen to your prayers; when you call on me, I will say, 'I am here.'"

When the Son of Man comes in glory, he will say to those on his right, "Come, inherit the Kingdom, because I was hungry and you gave me food. Do this and I will listen to your prayers; when you call on me, I will say, 'I am here.'"

Second Reading

A Letter to the Corinthians by St. Clement

Let us fix our attention on the Prince's blood and recognize how valuable it is to his Father God, since it was shed for our rescue and brought the gift of a change of mind to the whole world.

If we look over the various ages of history, we will see that in every generation the Master has "offered the opportunity to change heart" to anyone who was willing to turn to him. When Noah reported God's message of a change of heart, everyone who listened to him was saved. Jonah told the Ninevites that they were going to be destroyed, but when they changed their attitude, their prayers gained God's forgiveness for their sins, and they were saved, even though they did not belong to God's people.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the agents of God's grace have spoken of a change of attitude; in fact, the Master of the whole universe himself spoke of a change of attitude with an oath: "As I live," says the Master, "I do not wish the death of sinners; I want them to change their attitude." He added this evidence of his goodness: "House of Israel, change your attitude from your wrongdoing. Tell the sons of my people, that if their sins were to reach from earth to heaven, if they are brighter than scarlet and blacker than sackcloth, you need only turn to me with your whole heart and say, 'Father,' and I will listen to you as much as if you were a holy people."

In other words, God wanted all those he loved to have the opportunity to change their attitude, and he confirmed this desire by his own omnipotent will. That is why we should obey his sovereign and

glorious will and prayerfully beg his mercy and kindness. We should debase ourselves before him and turn to his pity, rejecting futile deeds and quarreling and jealousy, which only lead to death.

Brothers and sisters, we should have humble minds, and put aside all arrogance, pride, and foolish anger. What we should do is act in accordance with the Scriptures, as the Holy Spirit says: "A wise man is not to take pride in his wisdom, or a strong man in his strength, or a rich man in his wealth. Anyone who is proud should be taking pride in the Master by looking for him and doing what is right and virtuous." Recall especially what Master Jesus said when he taught gentleness and patience. "Be merciful," he said, "so that you will be shown mercy. Forgive so that you will be forgiven. You will be treated in the same way you treat others; you will receive what you give; you will be judged in the same way as you judge; you will be treated kindly insofar as you treat others kindly; the degree of your giving will be the degree to which you receive."

These commandments and regulations should strengthen us to live in humble obedience to his sacred words. As Scripture asks, "Who am I to look upon with favor except the humble, peaceful man who trembles when I speak?"

And so, since we share in the heritage of such a number of vast, glorious achievements, we should hurry on toward the goal of peace, which was set before us from the beginning. Let us keep our eyes firmly fixed on the Father and Creator of the whole universe, and hold fast to his splendid, transcendent gifts of peace, and all his blessings.

An evil man is to give up his way of life, and a sinful man his thoughts; he is to turn back to the Master, and the Master will have mercy on him. Our God is kind and sympathetic, and always ready to forgive.

The Master does not wish sinners to die; he wants them to turn back to him and live. Our God is kind and sympathetic, and always ready to forgive.

Prayer

Dear Master, please protect us in our struggle against evil, and as we begin the exercise that is Lent, please make this day holy by our rejection

of ourselves. 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**Exodus 1.1-22*

These are the names of the descendants of Israel who, along with their households, came to Egypt with Jacob: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. Jacob's descendants numbered seventy persons, since Joseph was already in Egypt.

Joseph died, and so did all his brothers and that whole generation; but the descendants of Israel were fertile and increased rapidly; they multiplied and grew very powerful, and the land was filled with them.

Then a new king, who knew nothing of Joseph, came to power in Egypt; and he told his people, "Look, there are more descendants of Israel and they are more powerful than we are; so we should be clever in dealing with them, or they will grow more still, and might join our enemies and fight against us, and then leave our country."

And so they set foremen over them to oppress them with forced labor, building for them the cities of Pithom and Rameses. But the more hardship then inflicted on them, the more they multiplied and grew; and they were in dread of Israel's descendants. So the Egyptians imposed even harder service upon Israel's descendants; they made their lives bitter with hard work in bricks and mortar, and all kinds of slavery in the fields. Every form of service they were to perform was hard.

Then the King of Egypt told the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was named Shiphrah and the other Puah, "When you assist as midwives for the Hebrew women and see them giving birth, you are to kill the child if he is a son; but you may let the daughters live." But the midwives respected God and did not do what the king of Egypt commanded; they saved the male children alive.

So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said, "Why have you done this? Why have you allowed the male children to live?"

The midwives answered Pharaoh, "Because Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are strong, and give birth before the midwives can get to them."

And that was why God dealt favorably with the midwives; and the people multiplied and grew very strong; and because the midwives respected God, he built up families for them.

Pharaoh then commanded his subject, "You are to throw into the river every son that is born to the Hebrews; but you may let the daughters live."

The Master told Abraham, "Know this for certain; your descendants will be exiles in a land not their own, enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years. Then I will punish the nation that enslaved them.

I am the Master, your Savior and Redeemer. Then I will punish the nation that enslaved them.

Second Reading

A Sermon by St. Leo the Great

Dear friends, "at every moment the earth is full of God's mercy," and nature is itself a lesson for all the faithful in the worship of God. The sky, the sea, and all that is in them give evidence of the goodness and omnipotence of their Creator, and the marvelous beauty of the elements as they obey him demands from intelligent creation a fitting expression of gratitude.

But with the return of that season designated in a special way by the mystery of our redemption, and of the days that lead up to the Passover feast, we are summoned more urgently to prepare ourselves by a purification of spirit. The special characteristic of the Passover feast is this: the whole Church expresses its joy in the forgiveness of sins. It is joyful for the forgiveness not only of those who are then reborn in the holy Bath, but of those too who are already included in the list of God's adopted children.

Initially, men are made new by the rebirth of the Bath; but they still need a renewal every day to repair the shortcomings of our mortal nature; and whatever degree of progress has been made, there is no one who ought not to be farther along still. Everyone must therefore exert himself to ensure that on the day of redemption no one will be found in the sins of his former life.

Dear friends, what the Christian should be doing at every moment should be done now with greater care and devotion, so that the Lenten fast imposed by the Emissaries will be fulfilled, not simply by refraining from eating food, but above all by the renunciation of sin.

There is no more beneficial practice as a companion to holy and spiritual fasting than that of charitable giving. This includes under the single name of “mercy” many excellent deeds of devotion, so that the good intentions of all the faithful will be of equal value, even where their means are not. The love that we owe both God and man is always free from any obstacle that would prevent us from having a good intention. The angels sang, “Glory to God in the spheres of heaven, and peace on earth to those in his favor.” A person who shows love and sympathy to those in any kind of hardship is blessed not only with the virtue of good will, but with the gift of peace.

The deeds of mercy are innumerable. Their very variety brings this advantage to those who are true Christians, that when it comes to charitable giving, not only the rich and affluent but those of average means and even the poor are also able to play their part. Those who are unequal in their capacity to give can be equal in love within their hearts.

This time of fasting opens the gates of heaven to us. Let us welcome it and pray that when Easter comes we will share in the joy of the risen Master.

In everything we do, we should show that we are the slaves of God, so that when Easter comes we will share in the joy of the risen Master.

Prayer

Dear Master, may everything we do begin by your inspiration, continue with your help, and reach completion under your guidance. 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**Exodus 2.1-22, 18.4*

A man descended from Levi married another descendant of Levi, after which the woman became pregnant and gave birth to a son. When she saw that he was a beautiful child, she hid him for three months; but when she could no longer hide him, she made a box out of papyrus and caulked it with tar and pitch, put the child in it, and hid it among the reeds on the bank of the river. His sister kept watch at a distance, to see what would happen to him.

Once, Pharaoh's daughter came down to bathe in the river, while her maids walked along the bank. She caught sight of the box among the reeds, and set her maid to get it; and when she opened it, she saw the child, and suddenly the baby burst into tears. She pitied him, and said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children."

His sister then said to Pharaoh's daughter, "Shall I go and call a nurse for you from the Hebrew women, so that she can feed the child for you?"

Pharaoh's daughter told her to go; and so the young girl left and called the child's mother, and Pharaoh's daughter told her, "Take this child and nurse him for me, and I will pay you." So the woman took the child and nursed him, and the child grew, and she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, who took him in as her son, and named him Moses, and said "This is because I drew him out of the water."

It happened after Moses grew up that he went out to his relatives to see their forced labor; and he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, a relative of his. He looked around him, and since he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand.

But then when he went out the day after and saw two Hebrew men fighting, he said to the one who was in the wrong, "Why are you hitting your fellow Hebrew?"

He answered, "Who made you our sovereign and judge? Are you going to kill me the way you killed the Egyptian?"

This alarmed Moses, and he said, "This affair must be known, then!" And when Pharaoh heard of it, he tried to have him put to death; but Moses escaped from him and went to live in the land of Midian.

Once, as he was seated there by a well, there came seven daughters of a priest in Midian to draw water; and they filled the troughs to water their father's flock. Shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses stood up and defended them, and watered their flock.

When they came to their father Reuel, he said, "How is it you came back so early today?"

"An Egyptian saved us from being attacked by shepherds," they answered, "and he also drew enough water for us to water the flock."

"Where is he?" he asked his daughters. "Why did you leave him? Call him and invite him to dinner!"

Then Moses agreed to live with the man, who gave him his daughter Zipporah as his wife. She bore him a son, whom he called Gershom, because he said, "I have been a foreigner in a foreign land." The other son was called Eliezer, because he said, "My ancestors' God was my help, and he saved me from Pharaoh's sword."

When he grew up Moses, guided by faith, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter; he chose to suffer with the People of God rather than have the fleeting pleasures of sin. He fixed his eyes on the reward God had promised.

To bear the wound of the Prince was more to him than all the treasures of Egypt. With faith as his guild, he left Egypt behind. He fixed his eyes on the reward God had promised.

Second Reading

A Homily by St. John Chrysostom

Prayer and communication with God is a supreme good; it is a partnership and union with God. In the same way as the eyes of the body are lit up when they see light, our spirit is also illuminated by the infinite light of God when it directs its attention to him. I am not referring to the outward observance of prayer; I mean prayer from the heart, continuous throughout the day and not, not confined to fixed times or periods.

Our spirit should be eager to reach out toward God, and not simply when it is engaged in meditation, but also at other times, when it is carrying out its duties, caring for the destitute, performing deeds of charity, giving generously in the service of others, our spirit should be longing for God and keep him in mind, so that these works will be

seasoned with the salt of God's love, and so become a delicious offering to the Master of the universe. We can enjoy the benefit of prayer through the whole of our lives if we devote a great deal of time to it.

Prayer is the light of the spirit; it is true knowledge of God, and mediates between God and man. The spirit, once it is lifted up to heaven by prayer, clings to God with the greatest tenderness; like a child calling tearfully to his mother, it craves the milk that God provides it. It seeks the satisfaction of its desires, and receives gifts outweighing the whole world of nature.

Prayer stands in God's presence as an honored ambassador. It gives joy to the spirit, and peace to the heart. I am speaking of prayer, not words. It is a longing for God, a love too deep for words, and gift given by God's grace, not something that comes from man. The Emissary Paul says, "We do not know how to pray; but the Spirit takes our inarticulate cries and makes them into a plea for us."

When the Master gives this kind of prayer to a man, he gives him riches that cannot be taken away, heavenly food that satisfies the spirit. A person who tastes this food is set on fire with an eternal longing for the Master; his spirit burns as if it were in a fire of extreme intensity.

Practice prayer from the beginning. Paint your house with the tints of modesty and humility. Make it shine with the light of honesty; decorate it with the finest gold leaf of good deeds, and adorn it with the walls and stones of faith and generosity. Crown it with the dome of prayer, and in this way you will make it a perfect home for the Master. You will be able to receive him as if you were doing so in a splendid palace, and through his grace you will already possess him, with his image enthroned in the temple of your spirit.

Will you forget us forever? Will you leave us abandoned day after day? Please turn us back to you, Master, and we will come to you.

Please save us, Master, or we will die! Please turn us back to you, Master, and we will come to you.

Prayer

Master, with your loving care, please guide the change of attitude that we have begun, and help us to persevere with love and sincerity. 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

Exodus 3.1-20

Once, when Moses was tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, he led the flock across the desert to God's mountain Horeb, and one of YHWH's angels appeared to him in a fire flaming from the middle of a bush. He gazed at it, and saw that, though the bush was on fire, it was not being burnt up; and so Moses said, "I will go over and look at this remarkable sight, and see why the bush does not burn."

When YHWH saw that he was coming over for a closer look, God called to him from inside the bush, and said, "Moses! Moses!"

"I am here," he answered.

"Do not come near this place," said the voice. "Take your sandals from your feet, because the place you are standing is holy ground." He added, "I am the God of your ancestors—the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Moses covered his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

Then YHWH said, "I have, you may be sure, seen the oppression of my people in Egypt, and I have heard their cries because of their slave drivers, and I know their suffering; so I have come down to free them from the hands of the Egyptians, and to bring them from there to a land that is good and extensive, a land flowing with milk and honey; to the place where the Caananites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites now inhabit. Once the cries of the descendants of Israel reached me, I saw the oppression visited on them by the Egyptians; and so come to me now, and I will send you to Pharaoh, for you to bring my people, Israel's descendants, out of Egypt."

Moses answered God, "Who am I to go to Pharaoh and bring the descendants of Israel out of Egypt?"

YHWH answered, "You may be sure that I will be with you; and this will be your evidence that I have sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this very

mountain.”

Then Moses asked God, “Yes, but when I come to Israel’s descendants and tell them that the God of their ancestors has sent me to them, and they say to me, ‘What is his name?’ What shall I tell them?”

Then God answered Moses, “I AM the one who is.” He added, “You are to tell Israel’s descendants, ‘I AM sent me to you.’” And then he told Moses, “This is what you are to say to Israel’s descendants, ‘YHWH, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is my name forever, and this is how I am to be remembered by every generation.’ Go and have a meeting of Israel’s elders and tell them, ‘YHWH, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, appeared to me and said, ‘Know that I have visited you and seen what is done to you in Egypt, and I have said I will bring you up out of the suffering of Egypt to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey.’”

“They will then listen to you, and you and the elders of Israel are to go to the King of Egypt and say to him, ‘God YHWH of the Hebrews has met with us; and so please let us now go three days’ journey into the desert to make a sacrifice to our God YHWH.’”

“Yet I am certain that the King of Egypt will not let you go, unless he is forced; and so I will double my fist and hit Egypt with all sorts of miracles that I will perform among the people; and after that, he will let you go.”

God said to Moses, “I am the one who is.” Tell the people of Israel, ‘I AM sent me to you.’”

I, and only I, am Master; there is no one else who can save you. Tell the people of Israel, “I AM sent me to you.”

Second Reading

The Treatise Against Heresies by St. Irenaeus

Our Master, the Word of God, first drew men to God as slaves, but later freed those who had been made subject to him. He testified to this himself, “I do not call you slaves any longer, because a slave does not know what his master is doing. I call you friends, those I love, since I have told you everything I have learned from my Father.” Friendship with God brings the gift of immortality to those who accept it.

In the beginning, God created Adam, not because he needed mankind, but because he wanted to have someone on whom to bestow his blessings. And it was not simply before Adam, but before the whole of creation, that the Word was giving glory to the Father in whom he had his home, and was himself being glorified by the Father. The Word said himself, "Father, give me the glory that I had with you before the world existed."

And the Master did not need our service either. He commanded us to follow him, but the gift he gave was the gift of rescue. To follow the Savior is to share in his rescue; to follow the light is to enjoy light. Those who are in the light do not brighten the light; they are brightened themselves and illuminated by the light. They add nothing to the light; they are its beneficiaries, because they are brightened by the light.

The same is true of service to God; it adds nothing to God, and God does not need human service. No, he gives life and immortality and eternal glory to those who follow and serve him. He confers a benefit on his servants in return for their service, and on his followers in return for their loyalty; but he receives no benefit from them. He is rich, perfect, and needs nothing.

The reason why God demands service from human beings is this: because he is good and merciful, he desires to confer benefits on those who persevere in his service. In proportion to God's need of nothing is man's need for union with God.

This is the glory of human beings: to persevere and remain in the service of God. It was for this reason the Master told his students, "You did not choose me; I chose you." He meant that his students did not give him glory by following him, but that in following the Son of God they were receiving glory from him. As he said, "My will is that they will also be where I am, so that they will see my glory."

This is what the Master God asks of you: to hold him in reverence, to love, and to serve him with all your heart and soul.

This is the first and greatest commandment: to hold him in reverence, to love, and to serve him with all your heart and soul.

Prayer

Father, please look kindly on our weakness and reach out to help us with your loving power. 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 Sunday
in Lent

First Reading

Exodus 5.1-6.1

Afterward, Moses and Aaron went in and told Pharaoh, “This is what is said by YHWH, God of Israel: ‘Let my people go so that they can hold a festival to me in the desert.’”

“Who is this YHWH,” said Pharaoh, “for me to obey him and let Israel go? I do not know any YHWH; and I will not let Israel go.”

They answered, “The Hebrews’ God has met with us. Please let us go three days’ journey into the desert so that we can offer a sacrifice to our God YHWH, or he will visit a pestilence and war on us.”

Then the King of Egypt told them, “Moses and Aaron, why are you taking the people from their work? Get back to your labor.” And Pharaoh added, “See how many people are on the land already, and you are making them rest from their work!”

So the same day Pharaoh gave this command to the people’s slave-drivers and their foremen: “You are no longer to give the people straw to make bricks, as you used to. Have them go gather straw for themselves. And you are to impose on them the same quota of bricks they made before. You are not to reduce it, because they are lazy, and that is why they are crying to be let go to sacrifice to their God. Give even more work to the men for them to keep them busy and not pay attention to lies.”

So the people’s slave-drivers and their foremen left and told the people, “Pharaoh says he will not give you straw, and you are to go get straw for yourselves wherever you can find it; but none of your work is

going to be reduced.” Then the people scattered through the whole land of Egypt to collect stubble instead of straw; and the slave-drivers rushed them, and said, “Finish your work, the daily quota you had when there was straw.”

The Israelites’ foremen then came and complained to Pharaoh, “Why are you acting this way with your slaves? We are given no straw and still they tell us to make bricks. Your slaves may be beaten, but the fault is with your own people!”

He answered, “You are lazy! Lazy! That is why you are asking me to leave and sacrifice to YHWH. So leave and get to work; you will not be given any straw, but you are to produce your quota of bricks!” The Israelites’ foremen realized that they were in trouble, because they were told they would not have the amount of bricks reduced.

Then, as they left Pharaoh, they met Moses and Aaron, who were there waiting for them; and they told them, “Tell YHWH to look at you and be your judge! You made us something Pharaoh and his servants hate, and they will take up their swords and kill us!”

So Moses returned to YHWH and said, “Master, why have you brought trouble on this people? Why is it you sent me? Since I came to Pharaoh to speak in your name, he has done harm to this people; and you have not set them free at all.”

Then YHWH answered Moses, “You will now see what I will do to Pharaoh. He will be forced to let them go, and even be forced to drive them out of his land.”

Moses stood before Pharaoh and said, “This is what is said by the Master, the God of Israel: ‘Let my people go, for them to keep a feast in my honor in the desert.’”

The Master, the God of the Hebrews has sent me to you with this message: Let my people go, for them to keep a feast in my honor in the desert.

Second Reading *A Commentary on the Psalms by St. Augustine*

“Dear God, please listen to my plea, and attend to my prayer.”
Who is speaking? An individual, it seems. But see if it is an individual: “I called to you from the ends of the earth while my heart was in turmoil.”
Now it is no longer one person—or rather, it is one in the sense that the

Prince is one, and we are all cells in his body. What single individual can call from the ends of the earth? The one who calls from the ends of the earth has to be the Son's heir. It was said of him, "You have but to ask me, and I will give you nations as your inheritance, and the ends of the earth as your own."

This possession of the Prince, this inheritance, this body of the Prince, this one Church of the Prince, this unit that we are, calls out from the ends of the earth. And what does it call? "Please listen, dear God, to my plea, and attend to my prayer! I called you from the ends of the earth." That is, I made this cry to you "from the ends of the earth" or in other words, from everywhere.

And why did I make this cry? "While my heart was in turmoil." The speaker shows that he is present among all the nations in a troubled condition, not one of elevated glory.

Our pilgrimage on earth cannot be exempt from trouble; we progress by means of trouble. No one knows himself except through troubles, or receives a winner's crown except after victory, or exerts himself without an enemy or temptation.

The one who is crying from the ends of the earth is in anguish, but is not left on his own. The Prince chose to foreshadow us, his body, *by* his body, in which he has died, come back to life, and risen to heaven, so that the cells in his body can hope to follow where their head has preceded them.

He made us one and the same thing with him when he chose to be tempted by Satan. We hear in the Good News how the Master Prince Jesus was tempted by the devil in the wilderness; and the Prince was certainly tempted by the devil. In the Prince, you were tempted, because the Prince received his flesh from your nature, but gained rescue by his own power; he suffered death in your nature, but gained life for you by his own power; he suffered insults in your nature, but gained glory for you by his own power; and that means that he suffered temptation in your nature, but gained victory for you by his own power.

If we have been tempted in the Prince, then it is in him that we overcome the devil. Do you think only of the Prince's temptations and neglect to think of his victory? See yourself as tempted in him, and see yourself as victorious in him. He could have kept the devil away from himself, but if he were not tempted, he could not teach you how to

triumph over temptation.

They will fight you, but they will not defeat you, because I am with you to rescue you, says the Master.

You will not fall under a sword; I will keep you safe, because I am with you to rescue you, says the Master.

Prayer

Dear God, our Master, since you formed man from the earth's clay and breathed into him the spirit of life, and yet he turned from your face and sinned, in this time of changing our attitude, we call out for your mercy. Please bring us back to you and to the life your Son won for us by his death on the cross. 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

Exodus 6.2-13

God then spoke to Moses and said, "I am YHWH. I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as the Omnipotent God; but I was not known to them by my name YHWH. I also entered into a Treaty with them, whereby I would give them the land of Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage, where they were foreigners.

"I have also listened to the cries of pain of Israel's descendants whom the Egyptians kept as slaves, and I have kept my Treaty in mind. And this is why you are to say to Israel's descendants, "I am YHWH; I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians; I will rescue you from slavery to them, and I will set you free with a strong fist and severe punishments. I will take you on as my people, and I will be your God. You will then recognize that I am your God YHWH, the one who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will also bring you into the land I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and I will give it to you as your inheritance. I am YHWH."

This was what Moses relayed to Israel's descendants; but they

paid no attention to Moses, because of their mental suffering and their cruel slavery.

And then YHWH spoke to Moses again, and said, “Go and tell Pharaoh, King of Egypt, to let Israel’s descendants go out of his land.”

Moses answered YHWH, and said, “Israel’s descendants pay no attention to me, so how will Pharaoh pay attention? I have uncircumcised lips.”

But YHWH gave Moses and Aaron orders to deliver to Israel’s descendants and to Pharaoh, King of Egypt, to bring Israel’s descendants out of the land of Egypt.

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people God has made his own. Once you were not his people, but now you are the people of God. I will adopt you as my own people, and I will be your God.

I, your Master, will free you from Egypt’s slavery; my strong arm will bring you back. I will adopt you as my own people, and I will be your God.

Second Reading

A Sermon by St. Gregory Nazianzen

Acknowledge the one to whom you owe the fact that you exist, that you are breathing, that you can understand, that you are wise, and above all, that you know God and hope for the kingdom of heaven and the vision of glory, now darkened as if seen in a poor mirror, but then with greater completeness and purity. We have been made a son of God, coheirs with the Prince. Where did you get all this, and from whom?

Let me turn to what is of less importance: the visible world around us. What benefactor has made you able to look out on the beauty of the sky, the sun in its travels, the circling moon, the countless number of stars, with the arrangement and order they have, like the music of a harp? Who has blessed you with rain, with skill in farming, with different kinds of food, with technology, houses, laws, countries, a life of humanity and culture, with friendship and the close familiarity of kinship?

Who gave you power over animals, not only the tame one, but those you use for food? Who made you lord and master over everything on earth? In short, who endowed you with everything that makes man superior to all other living creatures?

Is it not God, the one who asks you in your turn to show yourself more generous than any other creature, and for the sake of all the other creatures? Because we have received so many wonderful gifts from him, would it not be a disgrace for us to refuse him this one thing, our generosity? Though he is God and Master, he is not afraid to be known as our Father; and shall we for our part repudiate those who are our kith and kin?

My brothers and sisters and friends, we should never let ourselves misuse what has been given to us as God's gift. If we do, we will hear St. Peter say, "Be embarrassed that you are holding on to what belongs to someone else. Resolve to imitate God's virtue, and no one will be poor." We should not work at piling up and hoarding wealth while others remain needy. If we do, the prophet Amos will speak out against us with these sharp words of warning: "Come now, those of you that are asking when the new moon will be over, for you to begin selling, and when the Sabbath will be over for you to begin opening your treasures."

We should put into practice the supreme, primary law of God. He sends down rain on the virtuous and vicious alike, and makes the sun rise on everyone without distinction. He has given the broad earth, the springs, rivers, and forests to all earth's creatures. He has given the air to the birds, and the bodies of water to those that live in water. He has given more than enough of all the basic needs of life, not as something private or restricted by law, not divided up with boundaries, but as something common to everything; and he has given it lavishly and with full measure. His gifts are not niggardly in any way, because he wanted to give an equal blessing to equal worth, and to show the abundance of his generosity.

Love your enemies, do good, share what you have freely, and ask for nothing in return; then you will be true sons of your Father, who makes the sun shine on good people and bad ones, and sends his rain upon both virtuous and vicious men.

Be kind in the way your Father is kind: your Father, who makes the sun shine on good people and bad ones, and sends his rain upon both virtuous and vicious men.

Prayer

Dear God, our Savior, please bring us back to you and fill our minds with your wisdom; may we be enriched by our observance of Lent. 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**Exodus 6.29-7.25*

YHWH told Moses, “I am YHWH. Tell Pharaoh, King of Egypt, everything I say to you.”

But Moses answered, “My lips are uncircumcised! How would Pharaoh pay attention to me?”

God returned, “You see, I have made you into a something like god to Pharaoh, and Aaron will be your prophet. You are to say all I command you; and your brother Aaron will tell Pharaoh to send Israel’s descendants out of his land. But I will make Pharaoh stubborn, and perform more and more miracles and wonders in the land of Egypt; and still Pharaoh will not listen to you, and so I will smash Egypt with my fist and bring my armies and my people, Israel’s descendants, out of the land of Egypt with tremendous punishments. And the Egyptians will recognize that I am YHWH when I bring my fist down upon Egypt and lead out Israel’s descendants from among them.”

Then Moses and Aaron did as YHWH commanded them. Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three when they spoke to Pharaoh.

Then YHWH said to Moses and Aaron, “When Pharaoh says to you, ‘Show me one of your “miracles,”’ you tell Aaron, ‘Take your staff and through it down in front of Pharaoh, and it will turn into a snake.’ So Moses and Aaron had an audience with Pharaoh and they did just what YHWH commanded. Aaron threw his staff down in front of Pharaoh, and it became a snake.

But Pharaoh then called in his wise men and sorcerers, and the Egyptian magicians also did the same thing with their incantations; every one of them threw down his staff, and it became a snake. But Aaron’s

staff swallowed their staffs. At this, however, Pharaoh grew stubborn, and did not listen to them, as YHWH said.

Then YHWH told Moses, “Pharaoh is obstinate; he refuses to let the people go. So go to Pharaoh in the morning when he goes out to the water to bathe, and stand by the riverbank to meet him, with the staff that turned into a snake in your hand. You are to tell him, ‘YHWH, the God of the Hebrews has sent me to you and said, “Let my people go to perform service to me in the wilderness.” Up to this time you have not listened, and so now this is what YHWH says; “This is how you will know that I am YHWH: I will strike the water in the river with the staff in my hand, and it will turn to blood; and the fish in the river will die, the river will reek with pollution, and the Egyptians will not be able to drink the river’s water.””

Then YHWH told Moses, “Tell Aaron, “Take your staff and hold it out in your hand over the bodies of water in Egypt, over their streams, ponds, and all their pools, for them to become blood; and there will be blood throughout the land of Egypt, even in wooden pails and stone pitchers.” And Moses and Aaron did this, just as YHWH commanded; Aaron lifted up his staff and struck the water in the river, in the sight of Pharaoh and his slaves—and all the water in the river turned into blood; the fish in the river died, the river reeked with pollution, and the Egyptians could not drink the river’s water. And there was blood throughout the land of Egypt.

Then the Egyptian magicians did the same thing with their incantations, and Pharaoh grew obdurate, and paid no attention to them, as YHWH had said. Pharaoh turned back and went into his palace, without being moved by it. And all the Egyptians dug around the river for water to drink, because they could not drink the water that was in the river. Seven days passed after YHWH struck the river.

The angel poured his bowl into the river, and the water turned to blood; then I heard him cry, “You are just, Holy One, and the punishment you have decreed is a just one. These men have spilled the blood of the sacred people and the prophets.

Then I heard another angel cry from the altar, “Master, Omnipotent God, your judgments are true and just. These men have spilled the blood of the sacred people and the prophets.

Second reading A Treatise on the Master's Prayer by St. Cyprian

My dear brothers and sisters, the commands in the Good News are nothing but God's lessons, the foundations on which to build hope, the underpinnings that strengthen faith, and the food that nourishes the heart. They are the rudder for keeping us on the right course, the protection that keeps our rescue secure. As they teach the receptive minds of believers on earth, they lead them safely to the kingdom of heaven.

God willed that a great many things would be said by his servants the prophets, and listened to by his people. But what is spoken by the Son is much, much greater than these; they are verified by the very Word of God who spoke through the prophets. The Word of God does not now command us to prepare for his coming: he has come in person and is opening up the way for us, and directing us toward it. Before this, we wandered around in the darkness of death, aimlessly and blindly; but now we have the light of grace shining on us, and we are to keep on the highway of life, with the Master going before us and directing us.

The Master has given us a great deal of good advice and commandments to help us toward our rescue. He has even given us a model for our prayer, and taught us how to pray. He has given us life, and with his usual generosity, also instructed us in how to pray. He made it easy for us to be heard as we pray to the Father in the words taught us by the Son.

He had already foretold that the time was coming when true worshipers would worship the Father in spirit and in truth. He fulfilled what he had promised earlier, so that those of us who have received the spirit and the truth through the holiness he gave us would be able to worship in truth and in spirit through the prayer he taught.

Could any prayer be more a prayer in the spirit than the one given us by the Prince, the one by whom the Holy Spirit was sent to us? What prayer could be more a prayer in truth than the one spoken by the lips of the Son, who is Truth himself?

It follows that to pray in any other way than as the Son taught us is not only a result of ignorance, but sin. He commanded it himself, and said, "You reject the command of God to set up your own tradition."

And so, my brothers and sisters, let us pray as our Master God has taught us. Asking the Father in words his Son gave us, letting him hear the prayer of the Prince ring in his ears, is to make our prayer one of friendship, a family prayer. Have the Father recognize the words of his Son. Have the Son who lives in our hearts also be upon our lips. We have him as the sinners' defense attorney before the Father; and so when we ask forgiveness for our sins, we should use the words given us by our attorney. He tells us, "Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you." What more effective prayer could we make in the name of the Prince than the one using the words of his own prayer?

Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask, and you will receive what you ask, for your joy to be complete.

Whatever you ask the Father in my name I will give you, so that the Son will show what the Father is really like. Ask, and you will receive what you ask, for your joy to be complete.

Prayer

Father, please look kindly on your children, and through the training we undergo in Lent, help us grow in our desire for 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.

ednesday

First Reading

Exodus 10.21-11.10

Then YHWH told Moses, "Hold out your hand toward the sky, for there to be darkness over the land of Egypt, so dark that it can be felt." So Moses reached out his hand toward the sky, and a thick darkness fell over all the land of Egypt for three days. No one could see anyone else; and no one could move from where he was for three days. But the descendants of Israel had light where they lived.

Then Pharaoh called for Moses and told him, "Go and perform your service to YHWH, but leave your flocks and herds back here. Your children may leave with you."

Moses answered, "You must also give us sacrifices and burnt offerings to perform our rituals to our God YHWH. So our livestock are to go with us; not a hoof is to be left behind. We have to take some of them to perform our service to our God YHWH; and even we do not know what we are to use for the service until we arrive."

But then YHWH made Pharaoh obstinate, and he would not let them go. Pharaoh told Moses, "Take yourself out of my sight! Be careful not to let me see you again! The day you see my face, you will die!"

Moses answered, "You are perfectly correct. I will never see your face again."

Then YHWH told Moses, "I will bring one more disaster on Pharaoh and on Egypt, and after that he will let you leave here; and he will not only let you go, he will actually drive you away. Now speak to the people, have every man and every woman ask from their neighbors articles of silver and gold." Then YHWH made the Egyptians look favorably on the people; and Moses himself had great prestige among Pharaoh's slaves and among the people.

Moses then said, "This is what is said by YHWH: 'About midnight, I will go out into Egypt, and all the firstborn in the land of Egypt will die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh sitting on his throne to the firstborn of the servant woman sitting behind her handmill, as well as the firstborn of the animals. Then there will be such wailing throughout all the land of Egypt as never happened before and will never happen again. But not a dog will lick any of the descendants of Israel, or any of their animals, so that you will know that YHWH has made a distinction between the Egyptians and Israel. And all these servants of yours will come down to me and bow down to me and say, 'Leave! And let all the people follow you!' After that I will leave.'" Then he left Pharaoh's presence in great anger.

But YHWH told Moses, "Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that my miracles will become that much more numerous in the land of Egypt." And so Moses and Aaron performed all these miracles in Pharaoh's presence; but YHWH made Pharaoh obstinate, and he would not let the descendants of Israel leave his land.

How justly those who enslaved your children deserved to be deprived of

light, because through your children the imperishable light of the Law was to be given to the world.

The deep gloom of night descended on Egypt, but a radiant light shone on your sacred people, because through your children the imperishable light of the Law was to be given to the world.

Second Reading

A Demonstration by Aphraates

Law and Treaty have been entirely changed. God changed the first agreement with Adam, and gave a new one to Noah; he gave another to Abraham, and changed this to give a new one to Moses. When the Treaty with Moses was no longer observed, he gave another Treaty in the final age, a Treaty never to be changed.

He established a law for Adam, that he was not to eat from the tree of life. He gave Noah the sign of the rainbow in the clouds. He then gave Abraham, chosen for his faith, the mark and seal of circumcision for his descendants. Moses was given the Passover lamb, the atonement for the people.

All these treaties were different from each other; and in addition, the circumcision that was acceptable to the giver of those treaties is the kind spoken of by Jeremiah: "Circumcise your hearts." If God's Treaty with Abraham was firm, this Treaty is also firm and trustworthy, and no other law can be passed, whether its origin is outside the law or among those subject to the law.

God gave Moses a law together with his rules and regulations; and when it was no longer kept, he made the law and the regulations null and void. He promised a new Treaty, different from the first, though the issuer of both is one and the same. This is the Treaty that he promised: "Everyone is to know me, from the least to the greatest." In this Treaty, there is no longer any circumcision of the flesh, or any seal on the people.

We know, my dear friends, that God set up different laws in different ages, which were in force as long as it pleased him. Afterward, they were made null. In the words of the Emissary, "In earlier times, the Kingdom of God existed under different signs."

In addition, our God is truthful and his commandments are perfectly trustworthy. Every Treaty was shown to be binding and trustworthy in its own time, and those who have been circumcised in

heart are brought to life and receive a second circumcision beside the real Jordan, the water of the bath of baptism that brings forgiveness of sins.

Joshua son of Nun renewed the people's circumcision with a stone knife when he had crossed the Jordan with the Israelites. Jesus our Savior renews the circumcision of the heart for the nations who believe in him and are washed in the Bath: circumcision by the "sword of his word, sharper than any two-edged sword."

Joshua son of Nun led the people across the Jordan into the promised land; Jesus our Savior has promised the land of the living to everyone who crosses the real Jordan and believes and is circumcised in heart.

It is a blessing, then, to be circumcised in one's heart, and to have been born again in water through this second circumcision. These people will receive their inheritance with Abraham, the faithful leader and father of every nation, because his faith was what was taken to be his virtue.

I will make a new Treaty with the house of Israel; I will put my laws in their minds and engrave them on their hearts not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.

I will not write my laws upon stone tablets; it will be upon the tablets of human hearts, and I will engrave them on their hearts not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.

Prayer

Master, please look kindly on us and listen to our prayer; and by the good works you inspire, please help us to train our bodies and be renewed in our spirits. 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

Exodus 12.1-20

YHWH then spoke to Moses in the land of Egypt, and said,

“This month is to be the beginning month; it is to be the first month of your year. Say this to all of Israel gathered here, ‘On the tenth of this month, every man is to find himself a lamb, one apiece for each household. If a household is too small for a whole lamb, he and his next-door neighbor are to obtain one, depending on the number of persons involved; you are to assign the lambs in proportion to the needs of each man. Your lamb is not to have any defects, and be a male in its first year; you may obtain it from either the sheep or the goats. You are then to keep it until the fourteenth of that month.

At that time, the whole of Israel will gather and kill the lambs at twilight; and they are to take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses where they eat it. They are then to eat its meat on that night, roasted, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Do not eat it raw or boiled; it is to be roasted at a fire, including its head, its legs, and its inner organs. None of it is to remain until the morning; you are to burn up in the fire whatever would be left over until the morning. And you are to eat it with your belt upon your waist, and your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. You are to eat it hurriedly, because it is YHWH’s Passover.

The reason is that I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, of both humans and animals, and I will execute retribution upon all the gods of Egypt. I am YHWH. And the blood will be your evidence as to where the houses are that you are in; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the destructive blow will not come upon you when I strike the land of Egypt.

And that day will be a memorial feast for you; you are to keep it as a festival to YHWH through every generation; you are to keep this festival as a perpetual institution. You are to eat unleavened bread for seven days, removing leaven from your households on the first day. Whoever eats leavened bread from the first to the seventh day will be excommunicated from Israel. On the first day, there will be a sacred assembly, and on the seventh day another sacred assembly. No sort of work is to be done on these days except what is connected with what you are to eat; that alone may be prepared.

That is how you are to keep the Festival of the Unleavened Bread, because it is on this very day I will have brought your armies out

of the land of Egypt; and that is why you are to observe this day as a perpetual institution, through every generation.

In the fourteenth day of the first month in the evening, you are to eat unleavened bread until the evening of the twenty-first of the month. There is to be no leaven in your houses, and whoever eats what is leavened is to be excommunicated from the community of Israel, whether he is a foreigner or a native. You are to eat nothing leavened; in all your houses you are to eat unleavened bread.

The elders fell prostrate before the Lamb and sang this new song: It was by your blood, Master, you have ransomed us for God.

We have not been redeemed by ephemeral gold and silver, but by the priceless blood of the Prince, the lamb without spot or defect. It was by your blood, Master, you have ransomed us for God.

Second Reading

A Homily by St. Asterius of Amasea

You were made in the image of God. Then if you want to be like him, follow his example; and since the very name you bear as Christians is a profession of love for human beings, imitate the love of the Prince.

Reflect for a moment on the riches of his kindness. Before he came as a man to be with human beings, he sent John the Bather to announce a change of attitude and lead men to put this into practice. John was also preceded by the prophets, who were to teach the people to change their attitude, to return to God and reform their lives.

Then the Prince came himself, and with his own lips cried, "Come to me, all of you who are worn out with work and overburdened, and I will give you rest." How did he accept those who listened to his call? He willingly forgave their sins, and instantly freed them from everything that troubled them. The Word made them holy, and the Spirit set his seal on them; then new man was reborn with the vigor of grace.

And what was the result? Those who had been God's enemies became his friends, those estranged from him became his children, and those who did not know him came to worship and love him.

And so we should be shepherds like the Master. We should meditate on the Good News, and as we see in this mirror the example of

zeal and loving kindness, we should become thoroughly schooled in these virtues.

We see them reflected in the form of an analogy of a shepherd with a hundred sheep. When one of them became separated from the flock and lost its way, that shepherd did not stay with the sheep who kept together in the pasture; he left to look for the stray. He crossed many, many valleys and thickets, he climbed high, towering mountains, he spent a great deal of time and work in wandering through lonely places until at last he found his sheep. And when he found it, he did not punish it; he did not beat it and drive it back; he gently placed it on his own shoulders and carried it back to the flock. He was happier about this one sheep that was lost and found than all the others.

Let us look more closely at the hidden meaning of this analogy. The sheep is more than a sheep, and the shepherd more than a shepherd; they are illustrations of holy truths. They teach us that we should not look on people as lost or beyond hope; we should not abandon them when they are in danger, or be slow to come to help them. When they turn away from the right path and wander off, we must lead them back, and celebrate their return, as we welcome them back into the company of those who lead good and holy lives.

Pass honest judgments, and have each person be merciful and forgiving to his brother or sister.

If you forgive others' sins, you Father in heaven will also forgive your sins. Have each person be merciful and forgiving to his brother or sister.

Prayer

Father, since we can do nothing without you, please help us by your Spirit to do know what is right and to be eager in doing your will. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit for all the endless ages. Amen.

*First Reading**Exodus 12.21-36*

Then Moses called all the elders of Israel together and told them, "Pick out lambs for yourselves in proportion to your families, and slaughter them as Passover sacrifices. You are to gather a bundle of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and sprinkle it on the lintel and the two doorposts of your houses; and none of you are to go out of the house until morning, because YHWH will pass through to strike down the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintels and the doorposts, YHWH will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses and strike you down.

And you are to observe this as a regulation for you and your descendants forever. When you come into the land YHWH gives you as he promised, and when your children ask you, "What is this ritual about?" you are to answer, "It is the Passover sacrifice to YHWH, commemorating when he passed over the houses of Israel's descendants in Egypt when he struck down the Egyptians and set our families free."

So the people bowed and gave worship to God; and then Israel's descendants left and did exactly what YHWH had commanded Moses and Aaron.

What happened at midnight was that YHWH struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat upon his throne to the firstborn of the captives in their dungeons, as well as all the firstborn of the livestock. And Pharaoh woke up in the middle of the night, and so did all of his servants and all the Egyptians; and a great cry arose, because there was not one household where there was not at least one person dead.

Pharaoh then called for Moses and Aaron during the night and said, "Wake your people and leave my people, you and all the descendants of Israel! Go perform your service to YHWH as you said; and take your flocks and your herds, as you said, and be gone from here, and you will be doing me a favor!"

The Egyptians also urged the people on, trying to send them out of the land as quickly as they could. They said, "If not, we will all be dead!" And so the people took their dough before it was leavened, since they had their kneading bowls bundled with the clothes on their

shoulders; and the descendants of Israel had done what Moses told them, and asked the Egyptians for articles of silver and gold and clothing; and YHWH made the Egyptians look favorably on them, and grant their requests; and so they plundered the Egyptians.

The descendants of Israel are to put the blood of the lamb on the doorposts and lintels of their houses. This blood will be your sign.

You have been redeemed by the priceless blood of the Prince, the lamb without any defect. This blood will be your sign.

Second Reading

The Mirror of Love by St. Aelred

The perfection of brotherly love lies in love for one's enemies. We can find no greater inspiration for this than grateful remembrance of the wonderful patience of the Prince. The one who is "more handsome than any mortal man" offered his handsome face to be spat on by sinners; he allowed the eyes that rule the universe to be blindfolded by reprobates; he bared his back to people who whipped him; he submitted the head that strikes terror in angels and archangels to the sharpness of thorns; he allowed himself to be made fun of and sneered at, and at the end of it all endured the cross, the nails, the lance, the gall, and the vinegar, and always stayed gentle, meek, and full of peace. In short, "he was led to slaughter like a lamb, and, like a lamb, was silent before the shearers, and did not open his mouth."

Could anyone listen to that wonderful prayer, so full of warmth, love, and unutterable serenity—"Father, please forgive them"—and balk at embracing his enemies with overwhelming love? "Father," he says, "please forgive them." Is there any lack of gentleness or love in this prayer?

Yet he put into it something more. It was not enough to pray for them; he wanted to find an excuse for them. "Father, please forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing." They are great sinners, yes, but they do not have much wisdom; and so "Father, please forgive them." They are nailing me to the cross, but they do not know who it is that they are nailing to the cross; "if they had known, they would never have crucified the Master of glory"; and so "Father, please forgive them." They think it is an outlaw, an impostor claiming to be God, a demagogue. I have hidden my face from them, and they do not

recognize my glory, and so “Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing.”

Now if someone wants to love himself, he should not allow himself to be corrupted by indulging his sinful nature. If he wants to resist the promptings of his sinful nature, he must enlarge the horizon of his love to contemplate the loving gentleness of the Master’s humanity. Also, if he wants to taste the happiness of brotherly love with greater perfection and enjoyment, he must extend the embrace of true love even to his enemies.

But if he wants to prevent the fire of divine love from growing cold because of the injuries he has received, he should keep the eyes of his soul always fixed on the serene patience of his beloved Master and Savior.

He surrendered himself to death and was included among outlaws. He took on himself the crimes of many, many others, and prayed all the while for sinners.

Jesus prayed, “Father, please forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing.” He took on himself the crimes of many, many others, and prayed all the while for sinners.

Prayer

Master, may our observance of Lent help to renew us, and to prepare us to celebrate the death and return to life 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

Exodus 12.37-49, 13.11-16

Then the descendants of Israel, about six hundred thousand men on foot, not counting the children, traveled from Rameses to Succoth; there was a crowd of mixed ancestry with them, along with their flocks and herds, which was a great deal of livestock.

They baked unleavened cakes with the dough they had brought

out of Egypt; it was not leavened because they were driven out of Egypt and could not wait for it; and they did not even have provisions for themselves.

The time the descendants of Israel stayed in Egypt was four hundred thirty years; and at the end of this four hundred thirty years—on the very day of the anniversary—all YHWH's armies left the land of Egypt. And this is a night of solemn commemoration to YHWH for bringing them out of the land of Egypt; this is YHWH's night, a solemn commemoration for all of Israel's descendants for every generation.

Then YHWH told Moses and Aaron, "These are the regulations for Passover: No foreigner is to eat it, except every man's slave who is purchased for money and then circumcised. Resident aliens and hired servants are not to eat it. It is to be eaten in one house, and you are not to carry the meat outside the house, or break any of its bones. The whole community of Israel is to keep the feast; and if a foreigner who is living with you wants to keep the Passover to YHWH, all of his males are to be circumcised, and then he may approach and keep it and be treated as if he were a native of the country; but no uncircumcised person is to eat it. The same law will apply to natives as to resident aliens.

"And when YHWH brings you into the land of the Canaanites, as he swore to you and your ancestors, and gives it to you, you are to set apart for YHWH everything that opens the womb: that is, every firstborn male that comes from an animal you own belongs to YHWH. You are to redeem every firstborn of a donkey with a lamb; and if you do not redeem it, then you are to break its neck. You are also to redeem all the firstborn human sons; and when in the future your son asks you what this means, you are to tell him, 'YHWH brought us out of Egypt, where we were held as slaves, with his strong hand. And what happened was that when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, YHWH killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human and animal; and that is why I sacrifice to YHWH all the males that open the womb, and redeem the firstborn of my sons.' This is to be like a sign tattooed on your hand or a pendant on your forehead, because YHWH brought us out of Egypt with his strong hand.

The parents of Jesus took him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Master, because the Master's law prescribed that every firstborn male had to be consecrated to him.

They offered to the Master on his behalf a pair of turtledoves or two young pigeons, because the Master's law prescribed that every firstborn male had to be consecrated to him.

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

The world of today reveals itself as at once powerful and weak, capable of achieving the best or the worst. There lies open before it the way of freedom or slavery, progress or regression, brotherhood or hatred. In addition, man is becoming aware that it is for himself to give the right direction to the forces that he has himself awakened, forces that can be his master or his servant. He therefore puts questions to himself.

The tensions disturbing the world of today are in fact related to a more fundamental tension rooted in the human heart. In man himself many elements are in conflict with each other. On one side, he has experience of his many limitations as a creature. On the other, he knows that there is no limit to his aspirations, and that he is called to a higher kind of life.

Many things compete for his attention, but he is always compelled to make a choice among them, and to renounce some. What is more, in his weakness and sinfulness he often does what he does not want to do, and fails to do what he would like to do. In consequence, he suffers from a conflict within himself, and this in turn gives rise to so many great tensions in society.

Very many people, infected as they are with a materialistic way of life, cannot see this dramatic state of affairs in all its clarity, or at least are prevented from giving thought to it because of the unhappiness that they themselves experience.

Many think that they can find peace in the different philosophies that are proposed.

Some look for complete and genuine liberation for man from man's efforts alone. They are convinced that the coming kingdom of man on earth will satisfy all the desires of his heart.

There are those who despair of finding any meaning in life: they

commend the boldness of those who deny all significance to human existence in itself, and seek to impose a total meaning on it only from within themselves.

But in the face of the way in which the world is developing today, there is an increasing number of people who are asking the most fundamental questions or are seeing them with a keener awareness: What is man? What is the meaning of pain, of evil, of death, which still persist in spite of such great progress? What is the use of those successes, achieved at such a cost? What can man contribute to society, what can he expect from society? What will come after this life on earth?

The Church believes that the Prince died and returned to life for everyone, and can give man light and strength through his Spirit to fulfill his highest calling: his is the only name under heaven in which men can be saved.

So too the Church believes that the center and goal of all human history is found in her Lord and Master.

The Church also affirms that underlying all changes there are many things that do not change; they have their ultimate foundation in the Prince, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Death, where is your victory? Where, death, is your sting? It is sin that gives death its sting; but thank God for giving us the victory through our Master Prince Jesus.

The Master is good to those who trust him, and to everyone who searches for him. But thank God for giving us the victory through our Master Prince Jesus.

Prayer

Eternal Father, please turn our hearts to you; and may we by searching for your kingdom and loving one another become a people who worship you in spirit and in truth. 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.



Second Sunday
in Lent


*First Reading**Exodus 13.17-14.9*

Then, when Pharaoh had led the people go, God did not lead them through the land of the Philistines, even though that was the nearest route, because God said, “This is in case the people change their minds when they see war and return to Egypt.” So God led the people around through the desert beyond the Red Sea; and the descendants of Israel left Egypt in battle array.

Moses brought Joseph’s bones with him, because he had bound Israel’s descendants by a solemn oath and declared, “God will be certain to come to you, and you are to carry my bones from here with you.”

They then journeyed from Succoth and camped in Etham at the edge of the desert; and YHWH preceded them during the day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and during the night in a pillar of fire, so that they could travel during both day and night. He did not remove the pillar of cloud during the day or the pillar of fire during the night from in front of the people.

Then YHWH told Moses, “Tell Israel’s descendants that they are to turn aside and camp before Pi-Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, opposite Baal Zephon; there is where you are to camp by the sea; because Pharaoh will say about Israel’s descendants, ‘They have become confused by the land; the desert has trapped them.’ Then I will make Pharaoh stubborn, and he will pursue them, and I will gain a great reputation over Pharaoh and his whole army, so that the Egyptians will realize that I am YHWH.” They did as he told them.

It was reported to the King of Egypt that the people had escaped, and the heart of Pharaoh and his servants was turned against the people, and they said, "Why have we done this? We let Israel free from serving us!" So he prepared his chariot and took his people with him, along with six hundred of his best chariots, as well as all the other chariots in Egypt with warriors on all of them. And YHWH made Pharaoh, King of Egypt, obstinate, and he pursued Israel's descendants, even while they were marching bravely away. So the Egyptians were then after them, with all Pharaoh's horses and chariots, and his cavalry and army; and they caught up with them as they were camping by the sea beside Pi-Harioth, opposite Baal Zephon.

When Israel came out of Egypt, and the family of Jacob came from a foreign land, Judah became God's sanctuary, and Israel his domain.

The Master preceded them in a pillar of cloud to show them the way. Jacob became God's sanctuary, and Israel his domain.

Second Reading

A Sermon by St. Leo the Great

The Master reveals his glory in the presence of selected witnesses; his body is like the rest of mankind, but he makes it shine with such radiance that his face becomes like the sun in its splendor, and his clothes as white as snow.

The most significant reason for this transfiguration was to remove the obstacle of the cross from the hearts of his students, and to prevent the humiliation of his voluntary suffering from disturbing the faith of those who had witnessed the surpassing glory that was hidden.

He was also providing with equal foresight a firm foundation for the hope of holy Church. The whole body of the Prince was to understand the kind of transformation that it would receive as his gift. The cells in that body were to look forward to a share in the glory which first blazed out in their head, the Prince.

The Master had spoken of this himself when he foretold the splendor of his coming: "Then the virtuous will shine like the sun in their Father's kingdom." The Emissary St. Paul also testified to this same truth when he said, "I consider that the sufferings of the present are not to be compared with the future glory that is to be revealed in us." In another place, he says, "You are dead, and your life is concealed with the Prince

in God. And when the Prince, who is your life, comes out into the open, you will also be revealed with him in glory.”

The miracle of the transfiguration also contains another lesson for the Emissaries, to strengthen them and lead them to complete knowledge. Moses and Elijah, the Law and the prophets, appeared with the Master in conversation with him; and this was to fulfill exactly, through the presence of these five men, the text which says, “Every statement is to be confirmed by two or three witnesses.” What words could be more solidly confirmed and more securely founded than the words proclaimed by both the old and new Treaties sounding in unison, and the utterances of the ancient prophecy and the teaching of the Good News in full agreement with each other?

The writings of the two Treaties support each other. The radiance of the transfiguration reveals clearly and unmistakably the one who had been promised by signs foretelling him under veils of secrecy. As St. John says, “the Law was given by Moses, but God’s blessings and truth came into being through Jesus the Prince.” The promise made through the shadows of prophecy stands revealed in him, along with the complete meaning of the regulations of the Law. He is the one who teaches the truth of prophecy through his presence, and makes obedience to his commandments possible through grace.

In the proclamation of the holy Good News, everyone should receive a strengthening of his faith. No one should be embarrassed by the Prince’s cross, since it was through it that the world was redeemed.

And no one should be afraid to suffer for the sake of virtue; no one should lose confidence in the reward that has been promised. The way to rest is through work, the way to life is through death. The Prince has taken on himself the whole weakness of our insignificant human nature; and so if we are firm in our faith in him and our love for him, we win the victory he won, and we receive what he promised.

When it comes to obeying the commandments or putting up with hardship, the words uttered by the Father should always ring in our ears: “This is my Son, the one I love, who pleases me greatly. Listen to him.”

You have come to Jesus, mediator of the new Treaty; do not refuse to listen to him. If those who refused to listen to his warning them on earth

did not escape punishment, it will be much less likely for us to escape if we do not listen to the one who warns us from heaven.

If only you would listen to his voice today and not grow obstinate! If those who refused to listen to his warning them on earth did not escape punishment, it will be much less likely for us to escape if we do not listen to the one who warns us from heaven.

Prayer

Dear God, our Father, please help us to listen to your Son; shine on us with your Word so that we will find the way to your glory. 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.

onday

First Reading

Exodus 14.10-31

Pharaoh was already close when the descendants of Israel looked over and there were the Egyptians marching after them. They were terrified, and the descendants of Israel called out to YHWH, and said to Moses, “Was it because Egypt had no graves that you took us away to die in the desert? Why have you done this to us, bring us away from Egypt? Did we not tell you in Egypt to let us keep being slaves to the Egyptians? It would have been better to be slaves to the Egyptians than to die in the desert!”

Moses answered, “Do not be afraid. Hold your ground, and watch the rescue YHWH will win for you today; the Egyptians you see today you will never see again; YHWH will fight for you, and you need only be still.”

Then YHWH said to Moses. “Why are you calling me? Tell the descendants of Israel to go on, and you raise your rod and stretch out your hand over the sea, and divide it; and the descendants of Israel will go through the middle of the sea on dry ground. But I will make the Egyptians obstinate, and they will follow, for me to gain the respect because of Pharaoh and his army with its chariots and horsemen. The Egyptians will then know that I am YHWH, when I have won respect for

myself because of Pharaoh and his army with its chariots and horsemen.”

Then God’s angel, the one who went at the head of the Israelite camp, moved around behind them, and the column of cloud moved from in front of them to their rear, where it came between the Egyptian and Israelite camp. It acted like a dark cloud to the Egyptians and a light for the Israelites, with the result that they did not come any closer to each other that night.

Then Moses stretched his hand over the sea, and YHWH made the sea recede by a strong wind that blew all night, and turned the sea into dry land, dividing the water; and so the descendants of Israel went into the middle of the sea on dry ground, with the water a wall to their right and to their left. The Egyptians, with all of Pharaoh’s horses, chariots, and horsemen, pursued them and followed them into the middle of the sea.

What happened then, during the time before dawn, was that YHWH looked out on the Egyptian army through the column of fire and cloud, and threw it into a panic; he clogged their chariot wheels so that they could hardly move. The Egyptians said, “Retreat! Escape from in front of Israel, because YHWH is fighting for them against the Egyptians!”

Then YHWH told Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea and let the water flow back over the Egyptians with their chariots and horsemen.” And Moses stretched his hand over the sea, and when morning came, the sea returned to its full depth, while the Egyptians were fleeing through it; and so YHWH drowned the Egyptians in the middle of the sea, and as the water returned, it covered the chariots and horsemen and all the army of Pharaoh that had entered the sea after the Israelites. Not so much as one of them survived. But the descendants of Israel had walked on dry land through the middle of the sea, with the water like a wall to their right and left.

That was how YHWH saved Israel from the hands of the Egyptians on that day; and Israel looked at the Egyptians dead on the shore. Israel saw in this way the tremendous deed YHWH had done in Egypt; and so the people were in awe of YHWH, and believed in YHWH and in his servant Moses.

Let us sing to the Master, who is glorious in his triumph; he has thrown

horses and their riders into the sea. The Master is my refuge and my defense; he has become my savior.

The Master is a warrior; YHWH is his name; the Master is my refuge and my defense; he has become my savior.

Second Reading

The Catecheses of St. John Chrysostom

The Israelites witnessed marvels, but you will see marvels too, that are greater and more splendid than the ones which happened to them as they left Egypt. You did not see Pharaoh drowned with his armies; but you saw the devil with his weapons conquered by the water of the Bath. The Israelites passed through the sea; you passed from death to life. They were saved from the Egyptians; you have been saved from the powers of darkness. They were freed from slavery to a pagan people, and you have been freed from the far greater slavery to sin.

Would you like another reason to show that the gifts you received are greater than theirs? The Israelites could not look at the face of Moses in its radiance, though he was their fellow slave and relative; but you saw the face of the Prince in his glory. Paul proclaimed, "We see the glory of the Master with unveiled faces."

In those days, the Prince was present to the Israelites as he followed them; but he is present to us in a much deeper sense. The Master was with them because of the favor he showed Moses, but now he is with us not simply because of Moses but because of your obedience. After Egypt, the people lived in the desert; after you leave this place, you will live in heaven. Their great leader and commander was Moses; we have a new Moses, God himself, as our leader and commander.

What was the distinguishing characteristic of the first Moses? "Moses," Scripture tells us, "was more gentle than anyone who lived on the earth." We can properly say the same thing about the new Moses, because with him there is the very Spirit of gentleness, united to him in his inmost being. In those days, Moses raised his hands to heaven and brought down manna, angels' bread, while the new Moses raises his hands to heaven and gives us the food of eternal life. Moses struck the rock and brought out streams of water; the Prince touches his table, strikes the spiritual rock of the New Treaty, and brings out the living water of the Spirit. This rock is like a fountain in the middle of the Prince's table, so that from everywhere the flocks can draw near to this

living spring and refresh themselves with the water of rescue.

Since this fountain, this source of life, this table, surrounds us with too many blessings to tell and fills us with the gifts of the Spirit, we should come to it with sincere hearts and pure consciences to receive grace and mercy in our time of need. May grace and mercy be yours from the only Son God ever fathered, our Master and Savior Prince Jesus; through him and with him may glory, honor, and power come to the Father and the life-giving Spirit, now and always, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

When he grew up, Moses, guided by faith, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter; he chose to suffer with the people of God rather than have the ephemeral pleasures of sin. He fixed his gaze on the reward God had promised.

To bear the wound of the Prince was more to him than all the treasures of Egypt; with faith as his guide, he left Egypt behind. He fixed his gaze on the reward God had promised.

Prayer

Dear God, our Father, please teach us to find new life through a change of attitude, keep us from sin, and help us live by your commandment of 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.

Tuesday

First Reading

Exodus 16.1-18, 35

Traveling from Elim, the whole community of descendants of Israel came to the Desert of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth of the second month after they left Egypt. There, the whole community of descendants of Israel muttered this complaint against Moses and Aaron in the desert, "We should have died at YHWH's hands in the land of Egypt when at least we had meat in our pots and ate all the bread we wanted! You brought us out into this desert to starve the whole community to death!"

Then YHWH told Moses, “Very well; I will rain bread down out of the sky for you; and the people are to go out and collect a definite amount every day, so that I can test whether they will follow my law or not. On the sixth day, they are to collect twice as much as every other day.”

Then Moses and Aaron said to all of the descendants of Israel, “At evening, you will know that YHWH brought you out of the land of Egypt; and in the morning you will see how great YHWH is, because he heard what your problems are with YHWH. That is, who are we for you to be complaining about us?”

Moses added, “You will see this when YHWH gives you meat to eat in the evening and all the bread you want in the morning. Yes, YHWH listens to the complaints you are making about him. Who are we? Your complaints are against YHWH, not us.”

Then Moses told Aaron, “Tell the whole community of descendants of Israel, ‘Come into YHWH’s presence to listen, because he has heard your complaints.’” And as Aaron spoke to the whole assembly of the descendants of Israel, what happened was that, as they looked out into the desert, suddenly YHWH’s radiance appeared in the cloud.

Then YHWH spoke to Moses, and said, “I have heard the complaints of Israel’s descendants. Tell them this: ‘At twilight, you will eat meat, and in the morning, you will be filled with bread; and you will recognize that I, YHWH, am your God.’”

And so in the evening, quail came up and covered the camp, and in the morning, dew lay all around the camp; and when the dew evaporated, there on the surface of the desert were small round flakes like hoarfrost. When the descendants of Israel saw it, they said, “What is it?” because they did not know what it was.

Moses told them, “This is the bread YHWH gave you to eat; this is what YHWH commanded: ‘Each man is to collect what he needs, an omer per person in his tent.’”

The descendants of Israel did this, and some collected more and others less; and when they measured it into omers, the one who collected more had nothing left over, and the one who gathered only a little did not have any deficiency; everyone had collected what each person needed. The descendants of Israel ate manna for forty years, until

they came to settled land; they ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan.

You fed your people with angels' bread, bread from the sky, ready, nearby, the source of every enjoyment and satisfying to every taste.

It was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven; it is my Father who gives you bread that really does come from heaven, the source of every enjoyment and satisfying to every taste.

Second Reading *A Commentary on the Psalms, by St. Augustine*

"Master, I cried to you; please listen to me!" This is a prayer we can all say; it is not my prayer, it is the prayer of the whole Prince. Or rather, it is said in the name of his body. When the Prince was on earth, he prayed in his human nature, and prayed to the Father in the name of his body; and when he prayed, drops of blood fell from his whole body. This is what was written in the Good News: "Jesus prayed fervently, and sweated blood." What is this blood streaming from his body but the martyrdom of the whole Church?

"Master, I cried to you; please listen to me! Please pay attention to the sound of my prayer when I call out to you!" Did you imagine that the calling came to an end when you said, "I cried to you"? You called out, but you do not yet feel as if you are freed from your worries. If anguish ends, calling for help ends; but if the Church, the Prince's body, must suffer anguish until the end of time, it must not only say, "I cried to you; please listen to me," it must also say, "Please pay attention to the sound of my prayer when I call out to you."

"Have my prayer rise up like incense in your sight; let the raising of my hands be an evening sacrifice." This is usually understood of the Prince, the head, as every Christian recognizes. When day was fading into evening, the Master gave up his life on the cross, to take it back again; he did not lose his life against his will. But we too are symbolized here. What part of him hung upon the cross if it was not the part that he received from us? How could God the Father ever throw aside and abandon his only Son, who is in fact one and the same God with him? Yet, the Prince, in nailing our weakness to the cross (where, as the Emissary says, "our old nature was nailed to the cross with him"), cried out with the very voice of our humanity, "My God, my God, why

have you abandoned me?”

The evening sacrifice is then the suffering of the Master, the cross of the Master, the offering of the victim that brings rescue, and the holocaust God finds acceptable. In his return to life, he made this evening sacrifice a morning sacrifice. Prayer offered in holiness from a faithful heart rises like incense from a holy altar; nothing is more fragrant than the fragrance of the Master. May everyone who believes share this fragrance.

And so “our old nature,” in the words of the Emissary, “was nailed to the cross with him, so that,” as he says, “our sinful body would be destroyed, and so that we would be slaves to sin no longer.”

I have been nailed to the cross with the Prince, and I now live my own life no longer; it is the Prince’s life that is alive in me.

I live by faith in the Son of god, who loved me and gave up his life for me; and I now live my own life no longer; it is the Prince’s life that is alive in me.

Prayer

Dear Master, please watch over your Church and guide it with your unfailing love; please protect us from what could harm us and lead us to what will save 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

Exodus 17.1-16

Then the whole community of the descendants of Israel began their journey from the Desert of Sin as YHWH commanded, and camped in Rephidim; but there was no water there for the people to drink. And so the people revolted against with Moses and told him, “Give us water to drink!”

Moses answered, “Why are you rebelling against me? Why are you revolting against YHWH?”

But the people were thirsty, and mutinied against Moses. “Why

is it you brought us out of Egypt, if you are going to kill us and our children and cattle with thirst?”

Moses then called upon YHWH, and said, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me?” And YHWH told Moses, “Go out in front of the people with the staff you struck the river with in your hand, taking some of the elders with you. I will then stand before you on the rock in Horeb; you are to strike the rock, and water for the people to drink will come out of it.”

Moses did this as the elders of Israel watched. He called that place Massah and Meribah, because of the mutiny of the descendants of Israel against YHWH as they said, “Is YHWH among us or not?”

Amalek then came and fought with Israel in Rephidim; and Moses told Joshua, “Gather some men and go out and fight against Amalek. I will stand on the top of the hill with God’s staff in my hand.” Joshua did as Moses told him, and fought against Amalek; Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And when Moses had his hand raised, Israel started winning the battle, and when he lowered his hand, Amalek began to win.

But then Moses’ hand grew tired, and they found a stone for him to sit on, and Aaron and Hur on each side held up a hand; and his hands remained steady until sunset, with the result that Joshua defeated Amalek and his people in the battle.

Then YHWH told Moses, “Write this down in a book to be remembered and read it out in Joshua’s hearing, that I will completely erase Amalek’s memory from under the sky. Moses also built an altar there, which he called, YHWH-Missi (YHWH is my banner), and said, “This is what YHWH has sworn; YHWH will war against Amalek generation after generation.”

You will draw water with joy from the spring of rescue, and on that day, you will say, “Thank the Master and call upon his name.”

The water I give you will become a spring of water inside you gushing up to eternal life. And on that day, you will say, “Thank the Master, and call on his name.”

Second Reading

Treatise Against Heresies by St. Irenaeus

From the beginning, God created mankind out of his own

generosity. He chose the patriarchs to give them rescue; he took his people in hand, and taught them, even though they were unteachable, to follow him. He gave them prophets, and accustomed mankind to carry his Spirit and unite with God on earth.

The one who stands in need of no one bestowed union with himself on those who need him; like an architect, he drew up the plan of rescue to those who tried to please him. He gave food by his own hand in Egypt to people who did not see him, he gave a law perfectly suited to those who were restless in the desert, and he gave a fitting inheritance to those who entered the prosperous land. He killed the calf he had been fattening to those who turned to him as their Father, and dressed them in the finest clothes. In these many ways, he was training the human race to participate in the harmonious song of rescue.

This is why John in the Book of Revelation says, "His voice was like the sound of a great deal of water." The Spirit of God is in fact a great deal of water, because the Father is rich and great. As the Word passed among all these people he provided a generous amount of help for those who were obedient to him, by drawing up a law that was fitting and proper for every circumstance.

He established a law for people governing the construction of the Tent and the building of the Temple, the choice of Levites, the sacrifices, the offerings, the rites of purification, and the rest of what belonged to worship.

But he needs none of all this himself; he is always full of everything good. Even before Moses existed, he had within himself every fragrance of everything pleasant; yet he tried to teach his people, even though they were always ready to return to idols. Through many acts of lenience, he tried to prepare them for perseverance in his service; he kept calling them to what was primary through what was secondary; that is, through foreshadowings of the reality, and through temporal things to eternity, through material things to what is spiritual, and through earthly things to what belongs to heaven. As he said to Moses, "You are to make everything following the pattern you saw on the mountain."

For forty days, Moses was engaged in remembering what God had said, and the heavenly patterns and spiritual images and foreshadowings of what was to come. St. Paul says, "They drank from the rock that followed them, and the rock was the Prince." After

speaking of what is in the Law, he continues, “All of these things happened to them as symbols; they were written to teach those of us on whom the end of the ages has come.”

Through foreshadowings of the future they were learning reverence for God and perseverance in his service; and so the Law was a school to teach them, and a prophesy of what was to come.

The law was our nursemaid until the Prince came and made it possible for us to be brought into conformity with God by faith; and now that the time of faith has come, we are not under the nursemaid any longer.

Before the time of faith came, the Law kept us strictly in check, and watched us closely until faith was revealed; and now that the time of faith has come, we are not under the nursemaid any longer.

Prayer

Dear Father, please teach us to live good lives, encourage us with your support, and bring us to 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

Exodus 18.13-27

Moses took his seat to decide cases for the people, and the people stood waiting for him to make his decisions from morning until evening. When Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, “What is this that you are doing for the people? Why are you the only one to sit on the bench, with all the people standing waiting for you from morning to night?”

“Because the people come to me,” answered Moses to his father-in-law, “to consult God. When they have a problem, they come to me, and I pass judgment between them; and I let them know God's regulations and laws.”

Then Moses' father-in-law said, “This is not good, what you are doing. You will be sure to wear yourself out, and so will the people

with you; it is too much for you; you can't do it by yourself. Listen to what I say, now; I am giving good advice, and God will be with you. Stand for the people before God, so that you can bring the problems to God; and you should teach them the regulations and laws and show them how to behave and the work they have to do. But you should also choose capable men who fear God from among the people, men who are truthful and hate greed, and set them over them to govern thousands, hundred, fifties, and tens; and have them be the judges of the people in ordinary cases. And then if there is any very serious matter, they should bring it to you; but they can judge the trivial cases themselves. That way, it will be easier for you, because they will bear the burden with you. If you do this, and if God commands it, then you will be able to survive, and all these people will go home in peace."

Moses listened to what his father-in-law said and did what he suggested. Moses chose capable people from the whole of Israel and made them heads of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens; and they were the ordinary judges of the people; hard cases were brought to Moses, while they took the trivial ones.

Then Moses saw his father-in-law off to his own country.

The Master came down in the cloud and spoke to Moses, and took some of the spirit he had given to Moses and gave it to the seventy elders, and when this spirit came upon them, they prophesied.

Moses chose capable men from all of the Israelites and made them leaders of the people; and when this spirit came upon them, they prophesied.

Second Reading

A Treatise on the Psalms by St. Hilary

"It is a blessing to fear the Master and follow the conduct he prescribes." Notice that when Scripture speaks of the "fear of the Master," it does not leave the phrase in isolation, as if it were a complete compendium of the faith. No, there is a great deal added to it, or presupposed by it; and from this we can learn its meaning and excellence. In the book of Proverbs, Solomon tells us, "If you call for wisdom and cry out for understanding; if you look for it as if it were silver and search for it as if it were a treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Master." We see here the difficult journey we must undertake before we

can arrive at the fear of the Master.

We must begin by calling for wisdom; we must hand over to our intellect the duty of making every decision. We must look for wisdom and search it out; and then we must understand the fear of the Master.

“Fear” is not to be taken in the ordinary sense; fear in this ordinary sense is the fright our weak humanity feels when it is afraid of undergoing something it does not want to happen. We are afraid, or become afraid, because of a guilty conscience, the rights of someone stronger, an attack from a stronger person, sickness, meeting a wild animal, suffering harm in any form. This kind of fear is not taught; it happens because we are weak. We do not have to learn what we should be afraid of, because objects of fear bring their own terror with them.

But this is what is written about the fear of the Master: “Come, my children, listen to me, and I will teach you the fear of the Master.” Then the fear of the Master has to be learned, because it can be taught. It does not lie in terror, but in something that can be taught; it does not arise from the timidity of our nature, and has to be acquired by obedience to the commandments, by holiness of life and knowledge of the truth.

For us, the fear of God consists totally in love, and perfect love of God brings our fear of him to its completion; our love for God is entrusted with its own responsibility: to observe his suggestions, to obey his laws, and to trust his promises. Let us hear what Scripture says: “And now, Israel, what does your God the Master ask of you except to fear your God the Master and behave as he tells you and love him and keep his commandments with your whole heart and your whole soul, so that things will go well with you.”

There are many things God tells us to do, though he is himself the way. When he speaks of himself, he calls himself the way, and shows us the reason why he called himself the way. “No one can come to the Father except through me.”

We must ask for these many ways we are to behave, we must travel along these many paths, to find the one that is good. That is, we will find the one way to eternal life through the guidance of many teachers; these ways are found in the law, the prophets, the Good News, the writings of the Emissaries, and in the different good deeds by which

we fulfill the commandments. It is a blessing for people to follow this conduct in the fear of the Master.

Those who fear the Master do their best to please him; those who love him are aware of his law.

He has mercy on those who fear him in every generation. Those who love him are aware of his law.

Prayer

Dear God of love, please bring us back to you, and send your Spirit to make us strong in faith and active in good deeds. 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.

FRIDAY

First Reading

Exodus 19.1-19, 20.18-21

On the first day of the third month after the descendants of Israel had left Egypt, they arrived at the Desert of Sinai, after setting out from Rephidim; and they pitched camp there in the Desert of Sinai, in front of the mountain.

Moses then climbed the mountain to God, and YHWH called him from the mountain, and said, "This is what you are to say to the household of Jacob and tell the descendants of Israel: 'You saw what I did to the Egyptians, and how I carried you to Myself on eagles' wings. And so if you will now obey my voice and keep my Treaty, you will be my special treasure, dearer to me than any other people, though the whole earth belongs to me. And you will be my kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.' This is what you are to tell the descendants of Israel."

Moses then came down and called the elders of the people, and put to them all that YHWH had commanded him to say, and then the people answered in unison, "We will do everything that YHWH has told us." Moses then brought back the people's answer to YHWH, and YHWH told Moses, "I am now going to come to you in a thick cloud, for the people to pay attention when I speak to you, and believe you

forever.” And Moses relayed to YHWH the people’s reply to this.

Then YHWH told Moses “Go to the people and have them become holy today and tomorrow; have them wash their clothes, and be ready for the third day, because on the third day, YHWH will come down on Mount Sinai as all the people look on. You are to set up a boundary around it, and tell the people, “Be careful not to go up to the mountain or touch its base; if anyone touches the mountain, he must be put to death. No hand is to touch him; he is to be stoned or shot with arrows; but whether he is man or beast, he is not to live.”

So Moses descended the mountain to the people, whom he made holy, and who washed their clothes, and he told the people to be ready for the third day and not to have intercourse with their wives.

What happened on the third day was that in the morning there was thunder and lightning from a thick cloud covering the mountain; there came an ear-splitting trumpet blast, making everyone in the camp quake. Moses then brought the people out of the camp to meet God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Mount Sinai was completely enveloped in smoke, because YHWH had come down on it in fire; its smoke was like that of a furnace, and the whole mountain shook violently. Then, when a new, long trumpet blast sounded and grew louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him with thunder.

And all the people witnessed the thunder and the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when they saw it, they quaked in fear and stood farther away, and said to Moses, “You speak to us, and we will listen; do not let God speak to us or we will die!”

Moses answered, “Do not be afraid. God has only come to test you, to put fear of him in you, to keep you from sinning.” Still the people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.

If you do what I tell you and keep my Treaty, you will be my own possession, set apart from all the nations, dearer to me than any other people. You will be my kingdom of priests, a consecrated nation.

You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a consecrated nation, a people God has claimed as his own. You will be my kingdom of priests, a consecrated nation.

Second Reading

Treatise Against Heresies by St. Irenaeus

In the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses tells the people, “Your God the Master made a treaty in Horeb; he made this Treaty with you, not your ancestors.” Now why did God not make this Treaty with their ancestors? Because “the Law is not directed at virtuous people.” Their ancestors were virtuous; they had the power of the Ten Commandments implanted in their hearts and souls. That is, they loved the God who made them, and did nothing unjust to their neighbors, and this is why they did not need to be warned by written words of advice; they had the virtue of the Law in their hearts.

When this virtue and love for God had been forgotten and extinguished in Egypt, God was forced to reveal himself through his own voice, out of his great love for men. He led the people out of Egypt in power, so that man would become God’s student and follower once again; he made them frightened as they listened, to warn them not to treat their Creator lightly.

He fed them manna, for them to have spiritual food. In the Book of Deuteronomy, Moses says, “He fed you with manna, something your ancestors did not know, so that you would understand that man does not live only by bread, but is to live by every word that comes out of the mouth of God.”

He commanded them to love him, and trained them to practice virtue toward their neighbors, so that man would not be virtueless or unworthy of God. Through the Ten Commandments, he prepared man for friendship with him and harmony with his neighbors; and this was for man’s benefit, because God needed nothing from man.

In fact, it raised man to glory, because it gave him what he did not have: friendship with God; but it brought no advantage to God, because God did not need man’s love. Man did not possess the glory of God, nor could he attain it by any other means than through obedience to God. This is why Moses told the people, “Choose life, so that you will live on, and so will your descendants; love your God the Master, listen to his voice, and cling to him, because this is life for you and an increase in your years.”

This was the life that the Master was preparing man to receive when he spoke in person and gave the words of the Ten Commandments for everyone to hear, without distinction. These words remain with us as

well; they were extended and amplified through his physical coming, not abrogated.

God gave the people separately through Moses the Commandments that made them slaves; these were regulations that dealt with their instruction or their condemnation. As Moses said, “The Master commaded me at that time to teach you rules of virtue and discernment.”

But the rules that were given them to make them slaves and serve as warnings have been canceled by the new Treaty of freedom. The rules that belong to man’s nature and to freedom and to everyone without distinction have been expanded upon and broadened. Through their adoption as sons, God enabled man so generously and lavishly to know him as Father, to love him with his whole heart, and to follow his Word unfailingly.

Moses, the Master’s servant, fasted for forty days and forty nights to prepare himself to receive the Master’s Law.

Moses went up Mount Sinai to the Master and stayed there forty days and forty nights to prepare himself to receive the Master’s Law.

Prayer

Merciful Father, may our acts of change of attitude bring us your forgiveness, open our hearts to your love, and prepare us for the coming feast of the resurrection. 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

Exodus 20.1-17

God issued all these commandments:

“I am your God YHWH, the one who brought you out of slavery in the land of Egypt.

“You are to have no other gods besides me.

“You are not to make any carved image for yourself in the

shape of anything in the sky above or the earth below, or in the water beneath the earth; you are not to bow down to such things or serve them, because I, YHWH, your God, am a jealous God, and inflict punishment for fathers' sins upon their children as long as three and four generations later if they hate me, but I show mercy for a thousand generations to those who love me and keep my commandments.

"You are not to speak the name of your God YHWH frivolously, because YHWH will not overlook the guilt of someone who speaks his name lightly.

"Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. You are to labor and do all your work in six days; but the seventh day is your God YHWH's Sabbath. In it, you are to do no work, and this applies not only to you, but your sons, your daughters, your male and female servants, your cattle, and the aliens who live among you. The reason is that YHWH made the sky, the earth, and the sea and everything in them in six days, and rested on the seventh day; and so YHWH blessed the seventh day and made it holy.

"Respect your father and mother, so that you will have a long life on the land which your God YHWH is giving you.

"You are not to kill.

"You are not to commit adultery.

"You are not to steal.

"You are not to swear to lies against your neighbors.

"You are not to yearn after your neighbor's house; you are not to yearn for your neighbor's wife, nor his male or female slaves, nor his oxen or donkeys or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

The Master's Law is perfect, giving the soul life; the Master's words are to be trusted, making the simple wise; the Master's command is clear, giving light to the eye.

Anyone who loves his neighbor fulfills the Law; the whole Law is summed up in love, because love is the fulfillment of the Law. The Master's command is clear, giving light to the eye.

Second Reading *Treatise on Flight from the World by St. Ambrose*

What a man values is where he puts his heart. God does not usually refuse a good gift to those who ask for one. So since he is good,

and especially to those who are faithful to him, we should cling to him with all our soul, our whole heart, and our strength, and so enjoy his light and see his glory and possess the grace of supernatural joy. We should reach out our hearts to possess that good; we should exist in it and live in it; we should cling to that good which is beyond anything we can know or see and is characterized by perpetual peace and tranquillity, a peace which is beyond everything we can know or understand.

This is the good that permeates creation. We all live in it, we all depend on it. It has nothing above it; it is divine. No one but God alone is good; and so what is good is divine, and what is divine is therefore good. Scripture says, "When you open your hand, everything will be filled with goodness." It is through God's goodness that everything that is really good is given to us, and in it there is no alloy of evil. These good things are promised by Scripture to those who are faithful: "The land's good things will be your food."

We have died with the Prince; we carry in our bodies the sign of his death, so that the living Prince will also be revealed in us. The life we live is not our ordinary life now; it is the Prince's life: a life of sinlessness, chastity, simplicity, and every other virtue. We have come back to life with the Prince, and so let us live in the Prince, and rise up in the Prince, so that the serpent will not have the power here below to wound us in the heel.

Let us take refuge from the world; we can do this in spirit, even if we are kept here in the body. We can at the same time be here and in the presence of the Master; our souls must cling to him, we must walk in his paths by faith, not in mere appearance. We must take refuge in him; he is our refuge and strength. David addresses him in these terms: "I ran to you for refuge, and I was not disappointed."

Since God is our refuge, the God who is in heaven and above the heavens, we must take refuge from this world in the place where there is peace, where there is rest from drudgery, and where we can celebrate the great Sabbath, as Moses said: "The Sabbaths of the land will provide you with food." To rest in the Master and see his joy is like a banquet, full of happiness and tranquillity.

Let us take refuge like deer beside the running stream. Our soul should be thirsty, as David was thirsty, for the stream. What is that stream? Listen to David: "You have the stream of life." My soul should

say to this stream, "When will I come to see you face to face?" You see, the stream is God himself.

Love your Master God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.

This is what your Master God asks of you: to hold him in awe, to love him and serve him with all your heart and soul. This is the first and greatest commandment.

Prayer

Dear God, our Father, since by your gifts to us on earth we already share in your life, please guide us in all we do to the light 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.

Third Sunday in Lent

First Reading

Exodus 22.20-23.9

This is what is said by YHWH:

“Anyone who makes sacrifice to any god except YHWH alone is to be completely destroyed.

“You are not to mistreat foreigners or oppress them, because you were foreigners in the land of Egypt.

“You are not to cause trouble for any widow or orphan; if you cause them any kind of trouble, and they call out at all to me, I will certainly hear their cry, and my fury will grow hot and I will have you killed in battle; your wives will be widows and your children orphans.

“If you lend money to any of my poor people, you are not to be like bankers lending money to them; you are not to charge them interest. If you ever take your neighbor’s cloak as security, you are to return it to him before sunset; because that is his skin’s only covering. What will he sleep in? And when that happens and he cries to me, I will listen, because I am kind.

“You are not to disparage God, or curse a ruler of your people.

“You are not to be slow in offering the first of your ripe produce and your presses. You are also to give me the firstborn of your sons, and do the same with your oxen and sheep; they are to be with their mothers seven days, and on the eighth you are to give them to me.

“You are to be people sacred to me; you are not to eat meat found killed in the field; you are to throw it to the dogs.

“You are not to spread false rumors. Do not ally yourselves with evil people to be an unjust witness. You are not to follow the crowd when they do evil, or testify in a lawsuit in such a way that justice is perverted. You are not to show partiality to a poor man in a lawsuit.

“If you happen upon your enemy’s ox or donkey straying, you are to see to it that it is returned to him. If you see the donkey of someone who hates you straining under its burden, and you wish not to help it, you are to help it nonetheless.

You are not to deprive your poor of their rights in a lawsuit. Keep your distance from anything dishonest; do not kill innocent and virtuous people, but you are not to acquit the guilty. You are also to take no bribes, because a bribe blinds even the clear-sighted and perverts what virtuous people say.

“You are not to oppress a foreigner, because you know how foreigners feel, since you were foreigners in Egypt.

Be just to the weak ones and orphans, defend those who are in trouble and needy; rescue the weak and the poor and save them from the grasp of unscrupulous people.

God chose this world’s poor to be rich in faith; he has given them his kingdom as their inheritance. Rescue the weak and the poor and save them from the grasp of unscrupulous people.

Second Reading

A Treatise on John by St. Augustine

“A woman came.” She is a symbol of the Church that has not yet become virtuous and that is about to be made virtuous. Virtue follows from the conversation. She came in ignorance, she found the Prince, and he enters into a conversation with her.

Let us see what it is about; let us see why “a Samaritan woman came to draw water.” The Samaritans did not form a part of the Jewish people; they were foreigners. The fact that she came from a foreign people is part of the symbolic meaning, because she is a symbol of the Church. The Church was to come from the Gentiles, a different race from the Jews.

We must then recognize ourselves in what she says and in her person, and show our own gratitude to God along with her. She was a symbol, not the reality; she foreshadowed the reality, and the reality came into existence. She found faith in the Prince, who was using her as a symbol to teach us what was coming. “She came,” then, “to draw water.” She had simply come to draw water, something normal for a man or woman.

“Jesus said to her, ‘Please give me water to drink,’ because his students had gone into the town to buy food. And the Samaritan woman answered, ‘What is this? You, a Judean, are asking a Samaritan like me for a drink?’ because the Judeans have nothing to do with Samaritans.”

The Samaritans were foreigners; Jews never used their utensils. The woman was carrying a pail for drawing water, and was astonished that a Jew would ask her for a drink of water, a thing that Jews would not do. But the one who was asking for a drink of water was thirsty for her faith.

Listen now and learn who it is that is asking for a drink: “Jesus answered, ‘If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is asking you for a drink, you would be asking favors from him, and he would give you living water.’”

He asks for a drink, and he promises a drink. He is in need, a person who hopes to receive something; but he is rich, a person about to satisfy the thirst of others. He says, “If you knew the gift of God.” The gift of God is the Holy Spirit. But he is still using veiled language as he speaks to the woman and gradually enters her heart. Or is he already teaching her? What could be more gentle and kind than the encouragement he gives? “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that is asking you for a drink, you would be asking favors from him, and he would give you living water.”

What is this water he will give if not the water Scripture speaks of: “You have the fountain of life”? How can people feel thirst if they “drink deeply from the abundance in your house”?

He was promising the Holy Spirit in quenching copiousness; but she did not yet understand. In her failure to grasp his meaning, what was her answer? “The woman said to him, ‘Sir, give me that to drink, so that I won’t be thirsty and have to come here and draw this water.’” Her need forced her to this drudgery, but her weakness recoiled from it. If she had only been able to hear these words: “Come to me, all of you who are working hard and burdened, and I will restore you.” Jesus was saying this to her, so that her work would be at an end; but she was not yet able to understand it.

Jesus exclaimed, “If anyone is thirsty, he should come to me and drink! Streams of living water will flow from the heart of anyone who believes

in me.” He was speaking of the Spirit who would be received by those who believed in him.

Whoever drinks the water I give him will never be thirsty again. He was speaking of the Spirit who would be received by those who believed in him.

Prayer

Dear Father, since you have taught us to conquer our sins by prayer, fasting, and works of mercy, then when we are discouraged by our weakness, please give us confidence in your great 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

Exodus 24.1-18

Now YHWH told Moses, “You, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel come up to YHWH and worship me from a distance; but Moses alone is to come near YHWH; they are not to approach closely, and the people are not to go up to me.

So Moses came to the people and told them all that YHWH had said and decided; and the whole people answered in unison, “We will do everything that YHWH has told us.” Then Moses wrote down everything that YHWH had said. He rose early the next day and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel.

Then he sent some young men from the descendants of Israel to offer holocausts and peace sacrifices of oxen to YHWH; Moses took half of the blood and put it into basins, and splashed half on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Treaty and read it out to the people, and they said, “We will do everything YHWH has told us, and obey him.” Then Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, “This is the blood of the Treaty which YHWH has made with you in accordance with all that he has said.”

Then Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy elders of Israel

went up and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something that looked like pavement of sapphire, clear as the sky itself. But he did not lay a hand on the nobles among the descendants of Israel, and after they had seen God, they could still eat their meals.

Then YHWH told Moses, “Come up to me on the mountain and join me, and I will give you stone tablets with the law and commandments I gave you written on them, so that you can use them for teaching. Moses then came forward with his assistant Joshua, and then Moses went up YHWH’s mountain, and told the elders, “Wait for us here until we come back to you. Aaron and Hur are staying with you, and so anyone who has a problem is to go to them.” Then Moses ascended the mountain, which was now covered in a cloud.

YHWH’s glory remained on Mount Sinai, which was covered with a cloud for six days. On the seventh, YHWH called Moses from the depths of the cloud. The appearance of YHWH’s glory looked to the descendants of Israel like a fire burning up the top of the mountain. Moses, however, passed into the thick of the cloud and went up the mountain, where he remained forty days and forty nights.

God allowed Moses to hear his voice and led him into the cloud. Speaking to Moses face to face, God gave him his commandments: the law that brings life and knowledge, so that he could teach Jacob his regulations and Israel his rules.

In the desert meeting, it was through Moses alone that our ancestors communicated with the angel who had spoken to him on Mount Sinai. Speaking to Moses face to face, God gave him his commandments: the law that brings life and knowledge, so that he could teach Jacob his regulations and Israel his rules.

Second Reading

A Homily by St. Basil the Great

“A wise man should not take pride in his wisdom, nor should a strong man be proud of his strength, or a rich man of his wealth.” What then is the right thing to take pride in? What is the source of human greatness? Scripture says, “A man who is proud should be proud of this: that he knows and understands that I am the Master.” Here is human greatness, human glory and majesty: to know what really is great, to cling to it, and to look for glory from the Master of glory. The

Emissary tells us, "A man who is proud should take pride in the Master." He has just said, "The Prince was assigned by God to be our wisdom, our virtue, our holiness, and our rescue, so that, as it is written, and man who is proud should take pride in the Master."

Taking pride in God is perfect and complete when we take no pride in our own virtue and acknowledge that we have absolutely no real virtue, and have been made virtuous only by faith in the Master.

Paul takes pride in the fact that he sneers at his own virtue and searches out the virtue in faith that comes through the Prince from God. He wants only to know the Prince and the power of his return to life, and to have fellowship with his sufferings by taking to himself a resemblance of his death, in the hope that in some way he will reach the return to life from death.

Here we see arrogant pride crushed. There is nothing left for you to be proud of, humanity, because your pride and hope lie in killing all that is your own and looking for the future life that is in the Prince. Since we have its firstfruits, we are already immersed in it, and live entirely in the grace and gift of God.

"It is God who is active within us, giving us both the will and the achievement, in accordance with his good purpose." Through his Spirit, God also reveals his wisdom in the plan he has preordained for our glory.

God gives power and strength in our labor. "I have worked harder than anyone else," says St. Paul, "but I am not the one who did it; it is the blessing of God, who is with me."

God rescues us from dangers beyond all human expectation. "We felt within ourselves that we had received a death sentence, so that we would have no trust in ourselves, and only in God, who brings the dead back to life. He rescued us from this tremendous danger, and is still rescuing us; and we put our hopes in him to rescue us once again."

To know you, my God, is to reach holiness; to acknowledge your power is the source of immortality.

This is eternal life: to know you, the one true God, and Prince Jesus, the one you sent. To acknowledge your power is the source of immortality.

Prayer

God of mercy, please free your Church from sin and protect it from harm; and guide us, because we cannot be saved without 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**Exodus 32.1-20*

When the people saw that Moses was a long time without coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron, and told him, “Come now, make us gods to lead us; we do not know what has happened to Moses, the man who took us out of the land of Egypt.”

Aaron answered, “Take the golden earrings off the ears of your wives, sons, and daughters, and bring them to me.” Then all the people removed the golden earrings they were wearing and brought them to Aaron, who took the gold, melted it and sculpted it with an engraving tool into a calf; and the people said, “Here is your god, Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt!”

When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf, and issued a proclamation, which said, “Tomorrow is a feast dedicated to YHWH.” They rose early the next day, offered holocausts and peace offerings, and the people sat round eating and drinking, and stood up to dance and celebrate.

Then YHWH told Moses, “Go! Go down immediately! Your people, the ones you brought out of the land of Egypt, have become depraved! They have already turned away from the path I commanded them to follow, and have molded a calf and worshiped it and made sacrifices to it and said, ‘This is your God, Israel, that brought you out of Egypt!’” YHWH added, “I now see how stiff-necked this people is! So let me alone, for my fury to take fire against them and burn them up! Then I will make a great nation out of you!”

Moses then pleaded with his God YHWH, and said, “YHWH, why is your fury going to take fire against your people, the ones you brought out of the land of Egypt with such great power and so strong

a hand? Why should the Egyptians say, ‘He brought them out for their doom, to kill them in the mountains and to exterminate them from the face of the earth?’ Please! Turn away from your fierce anger, and soften your desire to do harm to this people! Remember your slaves Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, to whom you gave an oath by your own Person, and said, ‘I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky; and I will give the whole land I spoke of to your descendants, for them to inherit it forever!’” So YHWH softened his resolve to do harm to his people.

Moses then turned away and went down the mountain, with the two tablets of the Treaty in his hands; they were written on both sides, the front and the back, and were the work of God; even their writing was the writing God engraved on the tablets.

When Joshua heard the noise of the people as they shouted, he said to Moses, “There is the sound of war in the camp!”

Moses answered,
 “This is not the sound of shouts of victory
 or the cries of defeat;
 I hear the sounds of singing!”

And, as he neared the camp, he saw the calf and the people dancing; and Moses’ anger flared up, and he threw down the tablets from his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. Then he took the calf they had made, hurled it onto the fire, and ground it to powder, which he mixed in water and made the descendants of Israel drink it.

They exchanged the God who was their glory for a statue of an ox, a thing that eats grass! They forgot the God who had saved them, the one who had done such wonders in Egypt, and such marvels at the Red Sea.

Their senseless hearts grew dark; they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for idols that decay. They forgot the God who had saved them, the one who had done such wonders in Egypt, and such marvels at the Red Sea.

Second Reading

A Sermon by St. Peter Chrysologus

There are three things, brothers, by which faith remains firm, devotion stays constant, and virtue lasts; they are prayer, fasting, and mercy. Prayer knocks at the door, fasting attains what is asked, and

mercy receives it. Prayer, mercy, and fasting; these three are a unit, and they give life to each other.

Fasting is the soul of prayer, and mercy is the lifeblood of fasting; no one should try to separate them, because they cannot be separated. If you have only one of them or not all of them together, you have nothing. So if you pray, fast; and if you fast, show mercy; and if you want your petition to be heard, listen to the petitions of others. If you do not close your ears to others, you open God's ears to yourself.

When you fast, you see the fasting of others. If you want God to know that you are hungry, know that someone else is hungry. If you hope for mercy, show mercy. If you look for kindness, show kindness. If you want to receive, give. If you ask for yourself what you refuse to others, your asking is a mockery.

This should be the pattern for everyone when they practice mercy: show mercy to others in the same way, with the same generosity, and with the same promptness as you want others to show mercy to you.

And so prayer, mercy, and fasting should be one single plea to God on our behalf, one speech in our defense, and a threefold united prayer in our favor. We should use fasting to make up for what we have lost by despising others; we should offer our souls in sacrifice by our fasting. There is nothing more pleasing that we can offer God, as the psalmist said prophetically, "A sacrifice to God is a broken spirit; God does not despise a bruised, humbled heart."

Offer your soul to God, make him a gift of your fasting, so that your soul will be a pure offering, a holy sacrifice, and a living victim, remaining your own and at the same time made over to God. Whoever does not give this to God will not be excused, because if you give him yourself, you are never without the wherewithal to give.

To make these acceptable, mercy must be added. Fasting brings in no harvest unless it is watered by mercy. Fasting dries up when mercy dries up; mercy is to fasting as rain is to the earth. However much you may cultivate your heart, clear the soil of your nature, root out vices, and plant virtues, if you do not release the spring of mercy, your fasting will produce no yield.

When you fast, if your mercy is thin, your harvest will be meager; when you fast, what you pour out in mercy overflows into your barn. And so you do not lose by saving; you gather by scattering. Give

to the poor, and you give to yourself; you will not be allowed to keep what you refused to give to others.

Prayer accompanied by fasting and giving to the poor is good, since giving to the poor atones for every sin.

It wins forgiveness and eternal life, since giving to the poor atones for every sin.

Prayer

Dear Master, since you have called us to serve you and continue your saving work among us, may your love never abandon 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

Exodus 33.7-11, 18-23; 34.5-9, 29-35

Moses took his tent, which he called the “Meeting Tent,” and pitched it outside the camp, at a considerable distance; and everyone who wished to consult YHWH went to the Meeting Tent outside the camp.

The custom was that whenever Moses left for the tent, the people would all stand at the entrances of their own tents until he had entered his tent; and when Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and rest at its entrance while YHWH talked with Moses. All the people would see the column of cloud standing at the door; and all the people would rise and worship at their own tent entrances. YHWH would speak to Moses face to face, in the way one man speaks to another; and Moses would then return to the camp, while his servant a young man named Joshua son of Nun, did not leave the tent.

Once, Moses said, “Please show me your glory.”

YHWH answered, “I will have my whole goodness pass in front of you, and I will utter the name YHWH in your presence. I will be kind to those to whom I will be kind, and will have mercy on those on whom

I will have mercy.” He added, “But you cannot see my face; no one can see me and live.” Then YHWH said, “Here is a place by my side, where you are to stand upon a rock. And then, when my glory passes by, I will put you into a fissure in the rock, and will cover you with my hand while I pass. Then I will remove my hand, and you will see my back; but my face is not to be seen.”

Then YHWH came down in the cloud and stood there with him, and uttered the name YHWH; and YHWH passed in front of him and pronounced, “YHWH, Master YHWH, merciful and gracious, patient and full of goodness and truth, maintaining mercy for thousands, forgiving wrongs and disobedience and sin; but by no means exonerating the guilty, but punishing the wrongs of fathers upon their children and their grandchildren, down to the third and fourth generation.”

Moses hurried to bow his head down to the ground, and worshiped. Then he said, “If I have found favor in your sight, my Master, then I beg my Master to continue with us, even though we are a stiff-necked people; and please pardon our wrongs and our sin, and take us as your inheritance.”

And as Moses came down Mount Sinai (with the two tablets of the Treaty in his hand as he descended), he did not know that the skin on his face shone from his talking with YHWH. When Aaron and all the descendants of Israel looked at Moses they saw that his face was shining, and they were afraid to come near him; but then Moses called out to them, and Aaron and all the chiefs of the community returned for Moses to speak to them. Afterward, all the descendants of Israel neared, and he gave them as their commandments all that YHWH had told him on Mount Sinai; and when Moses finished his speech, he put a veil over his face.

But whenever Moses went inside into YHWH’s presence to speak with him, he would take the veil off until he emerged, when he would tell the descendants of Israel whatever he had been commanded; and whenever the descendants of Israel saw that the skin on Moses’ face was shining, Moses would put the veil over his face again until he entered again to speak with YHWH.

Moses veiled his face to hide it from the people of Israel; but we reflect the Master’s glory with unveiled faces and grow ever more radiant as we

are transformed into an image of him by the Master who is Spirit.

To this day that same veil is over their minds; but we reflect the Master's glory with unveiled faces and grow ever more radiant as we are transformed into an image of him by the Master who is Spirit.

Second Reading

*A Book addressed to Autolytus
by St. Theophilus of Antioch*

If you say, "Show me your God," I will tell you, "You show me what kind of person you are, and I will show you my God." So show me whether the eyes of your mind can see, and your heart's ears can hear.

It is like this: Those who can see with their body's eyes are aware of what is happening in this life on earth; they come to know things that are different from each other; they distinguish light and darkness, black and white, ugliness and beauty, elegance and awkwardness, proportion and disproportion, excess and defect. The same goes for the sounds we hear; high, or low, or pleasant. This is also true of the ears of our heart and the eyes of our mind in our ability to see God.

God is seen by those who have the ability to see him, provided they keep the eyes of their mind open. Everyone has eyes, but some have eyes that are covered in darkness, and unable to see the light of the sun. But because the blind cannot see it, it does not follow that the sun is not shining; the blind have to trace the cause back to themselves and their eyes. In the same way, you have eyes in your mind that are covered in darkness because of your sins and your evil deeds.

A person's soul has to be clean, like a mirror reflecting light; if there is rust on the mirror, his face cannot be seen in it. In the same way, no one who has sin within him can see God.

But if you choose, you can be cured. Put yourself under the care of the doctor, and he will open the eyes of your mind and heart. And who is to be the doctor? It is God, the one who heals and gives life through his Word and his wisdom; through his Word and wisdom he created the universe, because "by the Word the heavens were set in place, and by his Spirit everything came into them." His wisdom is supreme. God "by wisdom set up the earth, by understanding he arranged the heavens, and by his knowledge the deep places gushed out and the clouds poured down the dew."

If you understand this, and live in purity and holiness and virtue, you might see God. But before everything, faith and awe-filled respect for God must take the first place in your heart, and then you will understand all this. When you have taken off mortality and dressed yourself in immortality, then you will see God, in accordance with what you deserve; God lifts your body up to immortality along with your soul; and then, once you have become immortal, you will see the Immortal Being, if you believe in him now.

This is the time for us to win God's favor; this is the day for us to be saved. We should make an effort to please him by patience and fasting, and arm ourselves with integrity and rely on his power.

In everything we do, we should show that we are servants of God by patience and fasting, and arm ourselves with integrity and rely on his power.

Prayer

Dear Master, during this lenten season, please nourish us with your words of life, and make us one thing in love and prayer. 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

Exodus 34.10-28

Then YHWH told Moses, "Here is the Treaty I am entering into with you: I will do miracles before your people like nothing that has been done on earth or in any nation; and all the people among whom you live will see YHWH's deeds. It is an awesome thing that I will be doing with you. And you are to keep the commandments I am giving you today.

"Now then: I will drive out from before you the Amorites, Canaanites, Hittites, Perezites, and Jebusites; and you are to watch yourselves not to enter into any treaty with the inhabitants of the land

where you are going, to keep it from being a snare among you. And you are to destroy their altars, break their sacred poles, and chop up their wooden images, because you are to worship no other god, because YHWH, whose name is Jealousy, is a jealous God—all this to prevent you from making a treaty with the inhabitants of the land so that they will act like prostitutes with their gods and make sacrifices to their gods, and then invite you to eat some of the sacrifice. You are also not to take any of their daughters as wives for your sons, since the daughters will be like prostitutes with their gods and your sons will commit adultery with their gods. You are to have no molded gods for yourselves.

“You are to keep the Feast of the Unleavened Bread; you are to eat unleavened bread for seven days, as I commanded you, in the time designated during the month of Abib, because it was in the month of Abib that you came out of Egypt.

“Everyone who opens the womb is mine, as well as every male firstborn among your livestock, whether it is an ox or sheep. You are to redeem the firstborn of a donkey with a lamb; and if you do not redeem him, you are to break his neck. You are to redeem all the firstborn of your sons.

“No one is to appear before me empty-handed.

“You are to work for six days; but on the seventh, you are to rest; you are to take a respite even in plowing and harvest time.

“You are to keep the Feast of Weeks with the firstfruits of the wheat harvest, and the Feast of Harvest at the end of the year.

“Your men are to appear before YHWH, the God of Israel YHWH, three times a year; because when I drive out all the nations in front of you and expand your borders, no one will be there to try to seize your land when you go up to appear before your God YHWH these three times a year.

“You are not to offer the blood of a sacrifice to me with leavened bread, and the sacrifice of the Feast of Passover is not to be left until morning.

“You are to bring to YHWH’s house the firstfruits of your land.

“You are not to boil a kid in its mother’s milk.”

Then YHWH told Moses, “Write down what I have said, because it is in accordance with what I just told you that I have made a treaty with you and Israel.”

Moses remained with YHWH there for forty days and forty nights, during which he ate nothing and drank no water; and he wrote on tablets the Ten Commandments that YHWH had told him.

The law was given through Moses, but God's blessings and truth came through Prince Jesus. No one has ever seen God, but the Son who is in the Father's bosom has made him known.

Reflecting the glory of God with unveiled faces, we grow ever more radiant as we are transformed into an image of him. No one has ever seen God, but the Son who is in the Father's bosom has made him known.

Second Reading

A Treatise on Prayer, by Tertullian

Prayer is the spiritual offering that has abrogated the ancient sacrifices. "What do I get out of all your sacrifices?" asks God. "I have had my fill of holocausts of rams, and have no desire for the fat of lambs and the blood of bulls and goats. Who asked all his from your hands?"

We learn from the Good News what God has asked for. "The time is coming," he says, "when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. God is a spirit," and so he looks for worshipers who are like himself.

We are real worshipers and real priests. We pray in spirit, and so offer in spirit the sacrifice of prayer. Prayer is an offering that belongs to God and is acceptable to him; it is the offering he has asked for, and the offering he planned as his own.

We must dedicate this offering with our whole heart, we must fatten it on faith, care for it by truth, keep it unstained through innocence and clean through chastity, and crown it with love. We must escort it to God's altar in a procession of good deeds to the sound of psalms and hymns, and then it will gain for us all that we ask of God.

Since God asks for prayer offered in spirit and truth, how can he deny anything to this kind of prayer? We read, hear, and believe how great the evidence of its power is:

In ancient times, prayer was able to rescue people from fire, beasts, and hunger, even before it received its perfection from the Prince; and so the power of Christian prayer is that much greater. Prayer no longer brings a comforting angel into the heart of a burning furnace, or

shuts the mouths of lions, or transports food from the fields to the hungry; it no longer removes all sense of pain by the grace it wins for others. But it does give the armor of patience to those who are suffering and who are in trouble; it strengthens the power of grace, so that faith can know what it is gaining from the Master and understand what it is suffering for the name of God.

In the past, prayer was able to bring down punishment, rout armies, and withhold the blessing of rain. Now, however, the prayer of virtuous people turns aside the whole anger of God, keeps watch for its enemies, and pleads for its persecutors. Is it any wonder that it can call down water from the sky when it can also get fire from heaven? Prayer is the one thing that can conquer God; but the Prince has willed that it is to perform nothing evil, and has given it complete power over good.

Its unique skill is to call back the souls of the dead from the very journey into death, to give strength to the weak, to heal the sick, to exorcise the possessed, to open prison cells, and to free the innocent from their chains. Prayer washes sin away, drives out temptations, stamps out persecutions, comforts the fainthearted, gives new strength to the courageous, brings travelers safely home, calms waves, confuses robbers, feeds the poor, overrules the rich, raises up the fallen, supports those who are falling and is the prop of those who are standing firm.

All the angels pray. Every creature prays. Cattle and wild animals pray and bend their knees; as they come from their barns and caves, they look up to the sky and call out, raising their spirits in their own way. The birds too rise up and lift themselves to heaven; they open wings instead of hands in the form of a cross, and give voice to what sounds like a prayer.

Is there anything more to say on the duty of prayer? Even the Master himself prayed; and may honor and power come to him through all the ages of ages. Amen.

Those who worship the Father will worship him in spirit and in truth; the Father is looking for worshipers like this.

God is Spirit, and those who worship him are to worship him in spirit and truth; the Father is looking for worshipers like this.

Prayer

Dear Father, please help us be ready to celebrate the great Passover mystery, and make our love grow each day as we approach the feast of our 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**Exodus 35.30-36.1, 37.1-9*

Moses then told the descendants of Israel, “YHWH has now named Bezalel, son of Uri, son of Hur, from the tribe of Judah, and filled him with the Spirit of God, and given him wisdom, understanding, and knowledge in all kinds of craftsmanship in designing objects of gold, silver, and bronze, and in cutting jewels to be set, in carving wood, and in every other kind of artisanship.

“And he has given his mind and that of Aholiab, son of Ahisamach, from the tribe of Dan, the ability to teach; and has endowed them with skill in engraving and designing and tapestry-making with blue, purple, and scarlet thread and fine linen, and in weaving—for all sorts of work and artistic designs. And Bezalel and Aholiab, and every skilled artisan to whom YHWH has imparted wisdom and understanding in executing all the work necessary for the sanctuary are to do whatever YHWH has commanded.”

Bezalel then made the Chest of acacia wood; it was two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high. He overlaid it with pure gold inside and outside, and made a molding of gold around it. He cast four rings of gold to be set in its corners, two rings on each side, and made poles of acacia wood overlaid with gold, which he put into the rings at the sides of the Chest so that the Chest could be carried.

He also made the Mercy Seat of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and a cubit and a half wide; and then fashioned two cherubim of beaten gold, which he placed at each of the ends of the Mercy Seat. These cherubim were directly attached to the Mercy Seat; they spread their wings above it and covered the Mercy Seat with them,

and were facing one another, that is, toward the Mercy Seat.

How dear is your residence to me, Master, God of our armies; my soul is yearning for the Master's courts; my heart and my body are filled with joy in the living God.

How holy is the sanctuary of the Supreme Being! God fills it with his presence and his eternal strength; my heart and my body are filled with joy in the living God.

Second Reading *Moral Reflections on Job by St. Gregory the Great*

Holy Job is a foreshadower of the Church; at one time, he represents the body, and at another, the head. In the sense that he speaks in the name of its parts, he suddenly shifts to speaking in the name of its head. For instance, here, he says, "I have endured this without sin on my hands, because my prayer to God was pure."

The Prince suffered without sin on his hands, because he committed no sin and deceit was not found on his lips; yet he suffered the pain of the cross for our redemption. His prayer to God, alone out of all mankind, was pure, because in the throes of his suffering, he prayed for his oppressors: "Father, please forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing."

Is it possible to offer, or even imagine, a purer kind of prayer than the one which shows mercy toward one's torturers by pleading their case? It was thanks to this kind of prayer that the maddened persecutors who shed the blood of our Redeemer drank it afterward in faith and proclaimed him to be the Son of God.

The text goes on in an apt way to speak of the Prince's blood: "Do not cover my blood, earth; do not let my cry find a hiding place in you." When man sinned, God said, "You are dirt, and you will return to dirt." Dirt does not cover our Redeemer's blood, because when every sinner drinks the blood that is the price of his redemption, he offers praise and thanks, and to the best of his power makes that blood known to everyone around him. The dirt has not hidden his blood, because holy Church has preached in every corner of the world the mystery of its redemption.

Notice what follows: "Do not let my cry find a hiding place in you." The blood that is drunk, the blood of redemption, is itself the cry

of the Redeemer. Paul speaks of “the spattered blood that calls out more eloquently than Abel’s” Scripture had written about Abel’s blood, “The sound of your brother’s blood is calling to me from the ground.” The blood of Jesus calls more eloquently than Abel’s, because Abel’s blood asked for Cain’s death, while the Master’s blood has asked for, and received, life for his persecutors.

If the sacrament of the Master’s suffering is to work its effect in us, we must imitate what we receive and proclaim to mankind what we revere. The Master’s cry finds a hiding place in us if our lips fail to speak of this, though our hearts believe in it. It remains for all of us, so that his cry will not be hidden in us, to make known to those around us the mystery of our new life in the Prince.

Master, the blood of your Son, our brother, is crying out to you from the ground. It was a blessing for the ground to drink the blood of the Redeemer.

The blood he shed is more eloquent than Abel’s blood; it was a blessing for the ground to drink the blood of the Redeemer.

Prayer

Merciful Father, please fill our hearts with your love, keep us faithful to the Good News about the Prince, and give us the grace to rise above our human weakness. 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

Exodus 40.16-38

Moses did exactly what YHWH had commanded him to do.

And so, on the first day of the first month of the year, the Tent was put up. Moses pitched the Tent, fastened its pedestals in place, set up its boards, and placed its columns upright; and then he spread the covering over the Tent and put the roof-cloth over it, as YHWH had commanded Moses. He took the Treaty and put it into the Chest, inserted the poles through the rings in the Chest, put the Mercy Seat on

top of the Chest, and brought the Chest into the Tent, and hung the veil screening off the Chest of the Treaty, just as YHWH had commanded Moses.

Then he put the table in the Meeting Tent, on the north side of the Tent, outside the veil, and arranged the bread on it before YHWH, as YHWH had commanded Moses. He put the lampstand in the Meeting Tent across from the table, on the southern side of the Tent, and lit YHWH's lamps, as YHWH had commanded Moses. He put the gold altar in the Meeting Tent in front of the veil and burned fragrant incense on it, as YHWH had commanded Moses. He hung up the screen at the Tent door, and put the sacrificial altar in front of the entrance of the Meeting Tent, and offered holocausts and grain offerings as YHWH commanded Moses.

He set the wash basin between the Meeting Tent and the altar, and put water in it for washing; and Moses, Aaron, and his sons were to wash their hands and feet from it, every time they entered the Meeting Tent and neared the altar, as YHWH had commanded Moses. Then he set up the courtyard all around the Tent and the altar and hung up the screen that formed the courtyard gate; and in this way, Moses completed the work.

At this point, the cloud covered the Meeting Tent, and YHWH's glory filled the Tent; and Moses could not enter the Meeting Tent because the cloud was down upon it, and YHWH's glory had filled the Tent.

Whenever the cloud lifted from the Tent, the descendants of Israel would take up their journey; but if the cloud did not lift, they did not leave until it lifted. The cloud remained above the Tent during the day, and fire hung over it during the night in the sight of the whole house of Israel, during all their journeyings.

Our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all of them passed through the Red Sea; all of them were bathed into Moses in the cloud.

The cloud covered the Meeting Tent, and the Master's glory filled the Tent; all of them were bathed into Moses in the cloud.

Second Reading

A Sermon by St. Gregory Nazianzen

“It is a blessing for people to be merciful, because then they will

receive mercy,” says Scripture. Mercy is not the least of the blessings. Again: “It is a blessing to be considerate to the poor and destitute.” Once more: “A man who is merciful is generous and lends.” In another place: “All day long, a virtuous person is merciful and lends.” Let us grasp onto this blessing; let us earn the name of being considerate; let us be generous.

Not even night should interrupt you in your duty of mercy. Do not say, “Come back, and I will give you something tomorrow.” There should be no delay between your intentions and your good deeds; generosity is the one thing that cannot brook delay.

“Share your bread with the hungry, and bring the needy and homeless into your house,” with a joyful and eager heart. “A person who performs acts of mercy should do so cheerfully.” The benefit of a good deed is doubled when it is done promptly and speedily; what is given with a bad grace or against one’s will is distasteful and far from praiseworthy.

When we perform an act of kindness, we should be happy, not sad, about it. “If you undo the shackles and the bonds,” says Isaiah: that is, if you do away with miserliness and counting the cost, with hesitation and complaining, what will be the result? Something great and wonderful. There will be a marvelous reward: “Your light will break out like dawn, and your healing will spring up immediately.” Is there anyone who does not desire light and healing?

If you think I have something to say, fellow slaves of the Prince, brothers and coheirs of his, then let us visit the Prince whenever we can; let us care for him, feed him, dress him, welcome him, honor him, not only at a dinner, as some did, or by anointing him as Mary did, or by lending him a tomb, as Joseph of Arimathea did, or by arranging for his burial like Nicodemus, who loved the Prince half-heartedly, or by giving him gold, frankincense, and myrrh like the Magi before all the rest.

The Master of everyone asks for mercy, not sacrifice, and mercy is greater than millions of fattened lambs. We should therefore show him mercy in the persons of the poor and those who are lying on the ground today, so that when we come to leave this world, they will receive us into an everlasting residence, in our Master the Prince himself to whom be glory through all the ages of ages. Amen.

I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was homeless and you took me in. Now I tell you this: when you did this for the most insignificant of my brothers, you did it for me.

This is what I command you; have the same love for each other that I have for you. Now I tell you this: when you did this for the most insignificant of my brothers, you did it for me.

Prayer

Dear Master, please make this lenten observance of the suffering, death, and return to life of the Prince bring us to the full joy of Easter. 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.

Fourth Sunday in Lent

First Reading

Leviticus 8.1-17, 9.22-24

YHWH told Moses, “Take Aaron and his sons and the vestments, the anointing oil, a bull as sin offering, two rams, and a basket of unleavened bread, and have the community gather at the entrance of the Meeting Tent.”

Moses did what YHWH commanded, and when the community came together at the Meeting Tent entrance, Moses told them “This is what YHWH commanded must be done.”

Then Moses brought Aaron and his sons forward, and washed them in water; and then he put the tunic on Aaron, tied the sash around him, dressed him in the robe, and put the ephod on him, wrapping its embroidered belt about him and fastening it. Then he put the breastplate on him, and placed the Urim and Thummim in the breastplate; after which he put the miter on his head, on the front of which he fastened the gold plate, the sacred crown, as YHWH had commanded Moses.

Moses then took the anointing oil and anointed the Tent and everything in it, thus consecrating all of it. He sprinkled some of the oil on the altar seven times, and then anointed the altar and all its utensils, the washbasin and its base, to consecrate them. He then poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron’s head and consecrated him by anointing. Then Moses brought Aaron’s sons forward and put tunics on them, tied sashes about them, and placed turbans on their heads, as YHWH had commanded Moses.

After this, he brought up the bull for the sin offering, and Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the sin-offering bull, and Moses killed it, after which he took the blood and put some of it with his finger all around the horns of the altar, and so purified it. Then he poured the

blood at the base of the altar, and consecrated it, to make atonement for it; and afterwards, he took all the fat covering the entrails, the fatty lobe of the liver and two kidneys with their fat, and Moses burned them on the altar; but he burned the bull, its hide, meat, and offal in a fire outside the camp, as YHWH had commanded Moses.

Aaron then raised his hand over the people, blessed them, and came down from making the sin offering, the holocaust, and the peace offerings, and then Moses and Aaron went into the Meeting Tent, and emerged and blessed the people. YHWH's glory then appeared to all the people, and fire came out of YHWH's presence and consumed the holocaust and the fat on the altar; and when all the people saw it, they cried out and fell prostrate.

Under the Old Treaty, there were many priests, because death prevented them from continuing in office. But the Prince has an eternal priesthood because he remains forever.

The Master brought Aaron forward, conferred on him the priesthood of the people, and blessed him with great honor. But the Prince has an eternal priesthood because he remains forever.

Second Reading

A Treatise on John by St. Augustine

The Master tells us, "I am the world's light; a person who follows me will have the light of life, and not walk in darkness." In these few words, he gives a command and makes a promise. We should do what he commands so that we will not be embarrassed to yearn for what he promises and to hear him say on Judgment Day, "I made my promises depend on certain conditions. Have you fulfilled them?" If you say, "What did you command, Master our God?" He will tell you, "I commanded you to follow me. You asked for advice on how to enter life; and what life is that but the life about which it is written, 'the wellspring of life is with you?'"

So now let us do what he commands, and follow in the Master's footsteps. Let us throw off the chains that prevent us from following him. But can anyone remove these shackles without the help of the one spoken of in these words, "You have broken my chains?" Another psalm says of him, "The Master frees those in chains; the Master lifts up those who are down."

Those who have been freed and lifted up follow the light, and the light they follow says to them, "I am the world's light; a person who follows me will not walk in darkness." The Master gives light to the blind. My brothers, that light is shining on us now, because we have had our eyes anointed with the salve of faith.

His saliva was mixed with dirt to anoint the man born blind. We are descendants of Adam, blind from our birth; we need him to give us light. He mixed saliva with dirt, and this was what was prophesied: "Truth has sprouted from the ground." He said himself, "I am the way, and I am truth and life." We will be in possession of the truth when we see him face to face; this is his promise to us. Could anyone dare hope for something that God in his goodness did not choose to promise or bestow?

We will see him face to face. The Emissary says, "Now I understand partially, and now I see obscurely as if I were looking in a poor mirror; but then I will see him face to face." The Emissary John says in one of his letters, "My dear friends, we are now children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we will be. We know that when he is revealed, we will be like him, because we will see him as he is." This is a great promise.

If you love me, follow me. "I do love you," you protest, "but how do I follow you?" If your God the Master said to you, "I am truth and life," then in your desire for truth and your love for life, you would certainly ask him to show you the way to reach them. You would say to yourself, "Truth is a great reality; life is a great reality; if only it were possible for my soul to find them!"

I hate the paths of falsehood; your utterances are a lantern which guides my steps, a light for the pathway before me.

Master, who will we go to? What you say is eternal life; your utterances are a lantern which guides my steps, a light for the pathway before me.

Prayer

Dear God, our Father, since your Word, Prince Jesus, spoke peace to a sinful world and brought mankind the gift of being brought into conformity with God by the suffering and death he endured, please teach

us, the people who bear his name, to follow the example he gave us; may our faith, hope, and charity turn hatred to love, conflict to peace, and death to eternal life. We make this request through our Master the Prince.

onday

First Reading

Leviticus 16.2-28

YHWH told Moses, “Tell your brother Aaron that he may not come at just any time into the Holy Place inside the veil before the Mercy Seat on the Chest, or he might die when I appear in the cloud above the Mercy Seat.

“Aaron is to come into the Holy Place in this way: with a young bull for a sin offering and a ram as a holocaust; he is to put on the sacred linen tunic and the linen trousers, tie a linen sash about him, and put on the linen miter; but since these are sacred vestments, he is to wash his body in water before he puts them on. Then he is to take from the community of Israel two kids from the goats as a sin offering, and one ram as a holocaust.

“Aaron is to offer the bull as a sin offering to atone for himself and his household. He is to take the two goats and present them in front of the entrance of the Meeting Tent, and then Aaron is to draw lots to see which of the two goats is for YHWH, and which is the scapegoat; and he is to bring up the goat which is chosen for YHWH, and make a sin offering of it; but the goat on which the scapegoat lot fell is to be presented alive to YHWH, to make atonement upon it, and to let it go as a scapegoat into the desert.

“Then Aaron is to bring the bull which is the sin offering for himself and is to kill the bull to atone for himself and his household; and then he is to take a censer full of burning coals from the fire on the altar before YHWH, and, with his hands full of finely ground fragrant incense, bring it inside the veil, after which he is to put the incense on the fire before YHWH, so that the cloud of incense will cover the Mercy Seat on top of the Treaty, to keep himself from dying. He is to take some of the bull’s blood and sprinkle it with his finger on the Mercy Seat on the east side, and he is to sprinkle with his finger some of the blood seven times in front of the Mercy Seat.

“He is then to kill the people’s sin-offering goat, bring its blood inside the veil, and do the same with this blood as he did with the bull’s blood, sprinkling it on the Mercy Seat and in front of the Mercy Seat. In this way he will make atonement for the Holy Place because of their defilement, because of their disobedience, and all their sins; and he is to do the same with the Tent of Meeting when he enters it to make atonement until he departs; and when he has made atonement for himself, his household, and for the whole community of Israel, he is to go out to the altar that is before YHWH, and make atonement for it. He is to take some of the blood of the bull and some blood from the goat and put it all around the horns of the altar, and then splatter some of the blood on it with his finger seven times, cleansing it and consecrating it after the defilement of the descendants of Israel.

“When he has finished the act of atoning for the Holy Place, the Meeting Tent, and the altar, he is to bring up the live goat. Aaron is then to lay both of his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the disobedience of the descendants of Israel and all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, which he is to send away into the desert by a suitable man. The goat is to carry all their wrongdoing on itself to an uninhabited place, after which it is to be released into the desert.

“Then Aaron is to enter the Meeting Tent, remove the linen vestments which he put on when he entered the Holy Place, and leave them there. He is then to wash his body in water in a holy place, put on his clothes, and come out and offer his holocaust and the people’s holocaust, and thus make atonement for himself and the people. He is to burn the fat of the sin offering on the altar. And the one who released the scapegoat is to wash his clothes and bathe in water, after which he may enter the camp.

“The bull and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought into the Holy Place to make atonement, are to be taken outside the camp, where their skins, meat, and offal are to be burned in a fire. The one who burns them is then to wash his clothes and bathe, after which he may enter the camp.”

The Prince came as the high priest of the benefits which are to come; and he did not come with the blood of goats or calves, but with his own

blood. He entered the Holy Place one time for all, and won our eternal rescue.

He did not come into a Holy Place built by man; he entered heaven itself. He entered the Holy Place one time for all, and won our eternal rescue.

Second Reading

A Homily on Leviticus by Origen

Once a year, the high priest, leaving the people outside, entered that place where no one except the high priest can enter. In it was the Mercy Seat, and above the Mercy Seat the cherubim, as well as the Chest of the Treaty and the incense altar.

Let me turn to my real high priest, the Master Prince Jesus. In our human nature, he spent the whole year in the company of the people, the year he spoke of when he said, "He sent me to bring good news to the poor, and to announce the acceptable year of the Master, and the day of forgiveness." Notice how once in that year, on the Day of Atonement, he entered the Holiest of Places. Once he fulfilled God's plan, he passed through the heavens and entered the presence of the Father, to have him turn in mercy to the human race and to pray for everyone who believes in him.

The Emissary John, who knew of the atonement the Prince made to the Father for every human being, says this: "My children, I am saying this so that you will not sin; but if we have sinned, we have a Patron with the Father, the virtuous Prince Jesus. He is the atonement for our sins." In the same way, Paul refers to this atonement when he says, "God assigned him to be the atonement for our sins in his blood, through faith." And so we have a day of atonement that stays with us until the world comes to an end.

God's utterance tells us this: "The high priest is to put incense on the fire in the presence of the Master; the smoke of the incense is to cover the Mercy Seat above the tablets of the Treaty, so that he will not die. He is to take some of the blood of the bull-calf and sprinkle it with his finger over the Mercy Seat on the east."

God taught the people of the Old Treaty how to celebrate the ritual offered to him in atonement for the sins of human beings. But you have come to the Prince, the real high priest; and he has, through his blood, made God turn to you in mercy and has brought you into

conformity with the Father. You are not to think simply of ordinary blood, and must instead learn to recognize the blood of the Word. Listen to him as he tells you, “This is my blood, which will be shed for the forgiveness of your sins.”

There is a deeper meaning in the fact that the high priest sprinkles the blood on the east side. Atonement comes to you from the east; from the east comes the one whose name is Dawn, the one who is the liaison between God and men. So you are invited to look always to the east, since it is there that the Sun of Virtue rises for you, and it is there that the light is always being born for you. You are never to walk in darkness; the great, final day is not to envelop you in darkness. Do not let the light and fog of ignorance steal in upon you; so that you will always enjoy the light of knowledge, always stay in the daylight of faith, and always hold fast to the light of love and peace.

For our sake Jesus preceded us into heaven; and he has become like Melchizedek, a high priest forever.

He is the king of virtue; his life has no end; and he has become like Melchizedek, a high priest forever.

Prayer

Dear Father and Creator, since you give the world new life by your sacraments, may we who form your Church grow in your life and continue to receive your help 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

Leviticus 19.1-18, 31-37

YHWH then told Moses, “Speak to all the descendants of Israel, and tell them, ‘You are to be holy, because I, your God YHWH, am holy.

“Every one of you is to respect his mother and father and keep my Sabbaths; I am your God YHWH.

“Do not turn to idols or make molten gods for yourselves; I am your God YHWH.

“If you sacrifice a peace offering to YHWH, and you wish it to be acceptable, it must be eaten on the day you offer it or on the day afterward; if anything is left over on the third day, it is to be burned in a fire. If any of it is eaten on the third day, this is abhorrent, and will not be accepted, and for this reason anyone who eats it will be responsible for his own disobedience, because he profaned an offering sacred to YHWH, and that person is to be exiled from his people.

“When you reap your land’s harvest, you are not to reap the field to its very corners, nor are you to go over and pick up the gleanings of the harvest. You are also not to glean your vineyards, or pick every grape in the vineyard; you are to leave some for the poor and foreigners; I am your God YHWH.

“You are not to steal or act dishonestly, nor lie to each other. You are not to swear to a falsehood using my name, or speak your God’s name profanely; I am YHWH.

“You are not to cheat your neighbor, nor rob him. A hired hand’s wages are not to be kept in your possession overnight. You are not to curse the deaf or put an obstacle in front of the blind for them to trip over; you are to have awe reverence for your God; I am YHWH.

“You are not to render dishonest verdicts. You are neither to be partial to the poor nor deferential to the people in power; you are to hand down honest verdicts upon your neighbors. You are not to gossip about your people or stand by when your neighbor’s life is threatened; I am YHWH.

“You are not to harbor hatred for your brother in your heart. You may reprimand your neighbor, but you must not incur sin because of him. You are not to take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the descendants of your people; you are to love your neighbor as much as you love yourself; I am YHWH.

“Do not consult mediums and fortune-tellers; do not search them out and be defiled by them; I am your God YHWH.

“You are to stand in the presence of the elderly and show respect for the old, and have awe reverence for your God; I am YHWH.

“And if there is a foreigner living in your land with you, you

are not to mistreat him; a foreigner living among you is to be treated as if he was born among you, and you are to love him as much as you love yourself; because you were foreigners in Egypt. I am your God YHWH.

“You are not to use dishonest weights and measures, either in length, weight, or volume. You are to have honest scales, honest weights, an honest ephah, and an honest hin. I am your God YHWH, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.

“Therefore, you are to observe all my regulations and decisions, and act in accordance with them; I am YHWH.”

All God’s commands are summed up in one: love your neighbor as much as you love yourself. Love each other as I have loved you.

I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other as I have loved you.

Second Reading

A Sermon by St. Leo the Great

In John’s Report of the Good News, the Master says, “Everyone will know that you are students of mine by this: if you have love for each other.” In a letter by that same Emissary, we read, “My dear friends, we should love each other, because love comes from God, and everyone who loves is born from God and knows God; one who does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

And so the faithful should examine themselves and come to a true judgment about their attitudes of mind and heart. If they find some of love’s harvest stored in their hearts, they should not doubt God’s presence within them. And if they wish to increase their capacity to receive such a great guest, they should practice greater generosity in doing good with enduring love. If God is love, our acts of love should know no limit, because God cannot be limited.

Any time is the right time for actions of love, but these days of lent provide a special encouragement. Those who want to be present at the Master’s Passover in holiness of mind and body should make a supreme effort to win this grace, because love contains all the other virtues and covers over a multiplicity of sins.

As we prepare to celebrate that greatest of all mysteries, by which the Prince’s blood did away with our sins, we should first of all prepare the sacrificial offerings of works of mercy. In this way, we will

give to those who have sinned against us what God in his goodness has already given us.

Let us now extend to the poor and those in different kinds of hardships a more open-handed generosity, so that God will receive thanks from many voices and the relief of the needy who are supported by our fasting. No act of devotion on the part of the faithful gives God more pleasure than the one lavished on his poor. He recognizes the reflection of his own fatherly care when he finds charity with its loving concern.

And do not be afraid of not having enough means for these acts of giving; a generous spirit is itself great wealth. There can be no shortage of material for generosity when it is the Prince who is doing the feeding and the Prince who is being fed. In all this activity, there is present the hand of the one who multiplies the bread by tearing the loaf apart, and who increases it by giving it away.


The giver of charity should be free from worry and full of joy; his gain will be greatest when he withholds least for himself. The holy Emissary Paul tell us, "The one who provides seeds for the sowers will also provide bread for eating; he will provide you with more seeds, and will increase the harvest of your goodness" in our Master Prince Jesus, who is alive and reigning with the Father and the Holy Spirit through all the endless ages. Amen.

Give to others, and you will receive gifts: an honest measuring-pail with its contents pressed down, shaken together, and overflowing will be poured into your pocket.

You are to give to others in the same way God has given to you: an honest measuring-pail with its contents pressed down, shaken together, and overflowing will be poured into your pocket.

Prayer

Dear Father, may our lenten observance prepare us to embrace the Paschal mystery and proclaim your rescue with joyful praise. 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**Numbers 11.4-6, 10-30*

The foreign elements among the people had such an intense craving that even the descendants of Israel began to bemoan their fate, and said, “Can anyone give us meat to eat? Remember the fish we used to eat all the time in Egypt, and the cucumbers, melons, the leeks, onions, and garlic? Now we are shriveling away! There is nothing at all to see but this manna!”

Moses listened to the people, family after family at the entrances of their tents, bemoaning their fate and raising the fierce anger of YHWH, and Moses also became incensed. He said to YHWH, “Why are you treating me so badly? Why have I not found favor in your eyes, for you to lay the burden of all these people on me? Did I conceive all these people? Did I father them, for you to tell me, ‘Carry them in your arms in the way a nursemaid carries a nursing child’ to the land you promised their ancestors by oath? They are sobbing all over me, ‘Give us meat to eat!’ I cannot bear all these people by myself; it is too heavy a burden for me. If this is the way you treat me, then please kill me here and now—if I have found favor in your eyes—and do not let me see how miserable I am!”

Then YHWH told Moses, “Assemble seventy of the elders of Israel here before me, people you know are real elders, with authority over them. Bring them here to the Meeting Tent and have them stand there with you. I will then come down and speak with you there. I will take some of the spirit that you have and place it upon them, and they will bear the people’s burden with you, so that you will not be alone in carrying it.

“Then you are to tell the people, ‘Purify yourselves for tomorrow, and you will eat meat; you have sobbed in YHWH’s hearing “Will no one give us meat to eat? We were much better off in Egypt.” You will not eat for simply for one day or five days or ten days or twenty, but for a whole month, until it comes out your noses and becomes loathsome to you, because you despised YHWH, who is among you, and have come to him in tears and said, “Why did we ever come out of Egypt?”’”

Moses answered, “There are six hundred thousand people standing around me, and yet you are saying you will I’ve them meat enough to eat for a whole month. Are whole flocks and herds to be slaughtered for them? Are all the fish in the sea to be caught for them, for them to have enough?”

YHWH then told Moses, “Has YHWH’s arm grown short? Now you will see whether what I say will happen or not.”

So Moses emerged and told the people what YHWH had said, and he assembled the seventy elders of the people and gathered them around the Tent. Then YHWH came down in the cloud and spoke to him, and took some of the spirit that was upon him and placed it on the elders; and when the spirit came upon them, they prophesied, even though they never did so again.

It happened that two men, one named Eldad and the other Medad, had remained in the camp; and the spirit came and rested on them also, since they were on the list, but had not gone out to the Tent. They also prophesied, whereupon a young man ran and told Moses, “Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp!”

At this, Moses’ assistant Joshua, son of Nun, one of the men chosen, said, “Master Moses, stop them!”

Moses replied, “Are you jealous on my behalf? I wish all of YHWH’s people were prophets, and YHWH would put his spirit upon them!” Then Moses and Israel’s elders returned to the camp.

I will pour my Spirit on all mankind; your sons and daughters will prophesy. In those days, I will pour out my Spirit.

You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth. In those days, I will pour out my Spirit.

Second Reading

A Letter by St. Maximus the Confessor

God’s will is to rescue us, and nothing pleases him more than our coming back to him with real repentance. The heralds of truth and the servants of divine grace have told us this from the beginning, and repeated it in every age. In fact, God’s desire for our rescue is the primary, main sign of his infinite goodness; it was precisely to show how there is nothing closer to God’s heart than the divine Word of God the

Father condescended so unutterably far as to live among us in the flesh and do, suffer, and say everything necessary to bring us into harmony with God the Father, when we were his enemies, and to restore us to the life of blessedness we had been exiled from.

He healed our physical weaknesses by miracles; he freed us from our sins, no matter how many or how serious they were, by suffering and dying; he took them upon himself as if he were answerable for them, even though he was sinless. He also taught us in many different ways to desire to imitate him by our own kindness and genuine love for each other.

And this is why the Prince declared that he had come to call sinners to a change of heart, not the virtuous, and that it was the sick who needed a doctor, not the healthy. He stated that he had come to look for the sheep that were lost, and that he had been sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. More obliquely, in the analogy of the coin, he tells us that the purpose of his coming was to reclaim the royal image, which had become coated with the filth of sin. "You can be sure that there is joy in heaven," he said, "over one sinner who changes heart."

To give the same lesson, he revived the man who had been attacked by robbers, stripped and left half-dead from his wounds; he poured wine and oil on the wounds, bandaged them, placed the man on his own mule and brought him to an inn, where he left enough money for him to be tended, and promised to pay any greater expense on his return.

Again, he told us of how the father, who is goodness itself, was stirred with pity for his spendthrift son who returned and reformed his life by his change of heart; how he embraced him, dressed him again in the fine clothing that was proper to his dignity, and did not reprimand him for any of his sins.

Also, when he found the one sheep out of a hundred that had strayed from the flock and was wandering in the mountains, he brought it back to the fold; but he did not exhaust it by driving it in front of him; he placed it on his own shoulders and gently and kindly returned it safely to the flock.

He also proclaimed, "Come to me, all of you who are weary from work and heavy of heart. Take my harness upon you," he said, by which he meant his commands—or rather, the whole way of life he

taught us in the Good News. He then speaks of a burden; but that is only because the change of heart seems difficult. In fact, however, he assures us, “My harness does not chafe, and my burden is light.”

Once again, he teaches us about divine virtue and goodness, telling us to be like our heavenly Father, holy, perfect, and merciful. “Forgive,” he says, “and you will be forgiven; behave toward other people as you would wish them to behave toward you.”

Master, what pain I would be in if I knew nothing of your mercy! But you said, “I have no desire for the death of a sinner; I wish him to come back to me and live.” You called back to your love the Canaanite woman, and summoned the tax-collector to a change of heart.

When my heart is full of anxiety, you give me strength and joy. You called back to your love the Canaanite woman, and summoned the tax-collector to a change of heart.

Prayer

Dear Master, since you reward virtue and forgive repentant sinners, please bestow on us your forgiveness as we come to you confessing our guilt. 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

Numbers 12.16-13.3, 17-33

The people then left Hazeroth and camped in the Desert of Paran.

There YHWH said to Moses, “Send men to spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the descendants of Israel; you are to send one man who is a leader from each of the tribes of their ancestors. So Moses dispatched them from the Desert of Paran, as YHWH had commanded, and all of them were leaders of the descendants of Israel.

As Moses sent them to reconnoiter the land of Canaan, he said, “Go up here in the Negeb, into the highlands, and see what the land is like, and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, and

whether there are many or few of them, whether the land they live in is good or bad, whether the cities they live in are like camps, or are fortified, whether the soil is rich or poor, and whether or not there are forests. Be brave, and bring back some of the land's produce." That season was the beginning of the grape harvest.

They then went up and spied out the land from the Desert of Zin up to Rehob, near the entrance of Hamath; they started from the Negeb in the south, and went as far as Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai, and Talmai, descendants of the Anakim, lived. (Hebron had been built seven years before Zoan in Egypt.)

They then came to the Valley of Eshcol, where they cut down a branch with one cluster of grapes, which they carried between two of them on a pole; and they also brought some pomegranates and figs. The place was called Valley of Eshcol because of the "cluster" which Israel's men cut down there.

After forty days, they returned from their reconnaissance of the land; and when they had come back to Moses, Aaron, and the whole community of descendants of Israel, in the Desert of Paran at Kadesh, they reported to them and the whole community and showed them the land's produce. They said, "We went to the land you sent us to, and it really does flow with milk and honey; and this is its produce. But still, the people who live there are strong; the cities are fortified and very large, and we also saw descendants of the Anakim there. Amalekites live in the Negeb, Hittites, Jebusites, and Amorites in the mountains, and the Canaanites on the coast and the banks of the Jordan."

Then Caleb called for quiet from the people before Moses, and said, "We should go immediately and seize the land; we can conquer it." But the men who had accompanied him said, "We cannot go against these people! They are stronger than we are!" They spread bad reports of the land they had scouted, and said, "The land we reconnoitered is a land that eats up its inhabitants, and all the people we saw in it are huge. We saw giants! (The Anakim was a race of giants.) We looked like grasshoppers both to them and to ourselves!"

Your God the Master carried you in the desert in the way a man carries his child, but still you would not trust him.

You refused to go into the land he had promised you; you

defied your God the Master; but still you would not trust him.

Second Reading

A Sermon by St. Leo the Great

True respect for the Master's suffering means concentrating our heart's gaze on Jesus as crucified and recognizing our own humanity in him.

The earth—our earthly nature—should quake at the suffering of its Redeemer. The rocks—the hearts of those who do not believe—should break in two. The dead, imprisoned in the tombs of their mortality, should emerge, because the massive stones have come apart. Foreshadowings of the future return to life should appear in the holy city, the Church of God; what is to happen in our bodies should now be taking place in our hearts.

No one, no matter how weak, is denied a share in the victory of the cross; no one is beyond the help of the Prince's prayer. His prayer brought benefit to the crowd that raged against him, and it brings a great deal more benefit to those who turn to him with a changed heart.

Ignorance has been destroyed, obstinacy has been won over. The sacred blood of the Prince has quenched the flaming sword that barred access to the tree of life; the age-old night of sin has given place to the real light. Christian people are invited to share the riches of paradise; all those who have been reborn have the way open before them to return to their native country from which they had been exiled—unless by themselves they close off the path that could be opened by the faith of a thief.

The business of this life should not preoccupy us with its anxiety and pride, so that we no longer exert ourselves with all the love of our hearts to be like our Redeemer, and to follow his example. Everything he did or suffered was for our rescue; he wanted his body to share the goodness of its head.

First of all, in taking our human nature while remaining God, so that "the Word became man," he left no member of the human race, except for those who do not believe, without a share in his mercy. Is there anyone who does not share a common nature with the Prince if he has accepted the Prince, who took our nature, and is reborn in the Spirit

through whom the Prince was conceived?

Again, can anyone not recognize in the Prince his own weakness? Could anyone not see that the Prince's eating and sleeping, his sorrow and weeping tears of love are characteristics of the nature of a slave?

It was this nature of a slave that had to be healed from its ancient wounds and washed clean of the defilement of sin. That was why the only Son God ever fathered became the Son of Man also; he was to have both the reality of a human nature and complete divinity.

The body that lay lifeless in the tomb is ours. The body that came back to life on the third day is ours. The body that rose above all the spheres of heaven to be enthroned beside the Father's glory is ours. And so, if we follow the path of his commandments and are not ashamed to acknowledge the price he paid for our rescue in a base body, we too will come back to life and share his glory. The promise he made will be fulfilled in everyone's presence: "If anyone acknowledges me to other people, I will acknowledge him before my Father in heaven."

To those on the way to ruin, the message of the cross is stupidity; but those of us on the way to rescue see it as the proof of God's power.

We are delivering a proclamation about a crucified Prince, which is shocking to the Judeans and ridiculous to the Gentiles. But those of us on the way to rescue see it as the proof of God's power.

Prayer

Merciful Father, may the change of heart of our lenten observance make us your obedient people, and may the love within us be seen in what we do and lead us to the joy of Easter. 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

Numbers 14.1-25

Then the whole community burst into tears, and the crying lasted the whole night. All the descendants of Israel complained about

Moses and Aaron, and said, “We should have died in Egypt! Or in this desert! Why did YHWH bring us to this land only to die in battle and for our wives and children to be taken captive? Should we not return to Egypt?” So they told each other, “Let us choose a leader and go back to Egypt!”

Then Moses and Aaron fell prostrate before the assembled community of the descendants of Israel; but Joshua the son of Nun and Caleb, son of Jofhunneh, who were members of the scouting group, tore their clothes and said to the assembly of descendants of Israel, “The land we went through is an extremely good land; if YHWH takes pleasure in us, he will bring us into this land and give it to us, and it is a land flowing with milk and honey! But do not revolt against YHWH or be afraid of the people in this land, because they are bread for us; their protection has left them, and YHWH is with us! Do not be afraid of them!”

Then the whole community tried to stone them; at which YHWH’s glory appeared in the Meeting Tent in the presence of all of Israel’s descendants. And YHWH told Moses, “How long is this people to reject me? How long are they to disbelieve me, with all the miracles I have performed for them? I will send a plague on them and disinherit them, and make a nation greater and stronger than they from you!”

Moses answered YHWH, “But then the Egyptians will hear of it, because they know that with your power you brought this people up here from among them; and they will tell it to the people who live here. They heard that you are among these people, YHWH, and that you reveal yourself, YHWH, face to face, and your cloud hovers above them; you go in front of them in a column of cloud during the day and a column of fire at night. But if you kill these people all together, the nations who have heard of your reputation will say, ‘It was because YHWH was not able to bring this people to the land he promised them by his oath, he killed them in the desert.’

“So now, I beg you, please have my Master’s power be shown in all its greatness, as you have said, ‘YHWH is patient and full of mercy, and forgives wrongdoing and disobedience; but he does not exonerate the guilty at all, and punishes children for their fathers’ wrongs down to the third and fourth generation.’ Please pardon the wrong of this people, I beg you, in the greatness of your mercy, in the same way as you have

forgiven this people from Egypt up to now!”

Then YHWH answered, “I have pardoned them, as you have asked me. But I swear by my life and the glory that is to fill the whole world that all of the men who have seen my glory and the miracles I performed in Egypt and the desert and have defied me ten times now and refused to listen to what I say will not see the land I swore to their ancestors to give them, nor will any of those who rejected me see it!

“But because my slave Caleb has a different spirit in him and has followed me faithfully, I will bring him into the land he reconnoitered, and his descendants will inherit it. But since the Amalekites and the Canaanites now live in these valleys, turn around and moved into the desert on the Red Sea road.”

The Master is merciful and loving, slow to become angry and full of kindness. He will not always correct us; his anger will come to an end. The Master treats those who are in awe of him as tenderly as a father treats his children.

He knows what we are made of, and that we are dirt. The Master treats those in awe of him as tenderly as a father treats his children.

Second Reading

An Easter letter by St. Athanasius

My brothers, it is such a fine thing to move from feast day to feast day, from prayer to prayer, and from holy day to holy day. The time is now upon us when we are entering a new beginning: the proclamation of the blessed Passover, where the Master was sacrificed.

We are being fed with the food of life; we are constantly refreshing our souls with his priceless blood, as if it were a spring. But we are always burning to be satisfied—and yet, he is present himself to those who are thirsty, and in his goodness, he is inviting them to the feast day. Our Savior repeats what he said, “If anyone is thirsty, he should come to me to drink.”

He quenched the thirst not only of those who came to him at that time. Whenever anyone looks for him, he is freely admitted into the Savior’s presence. The grace of the feast is not restricted to one occasion; its rays of glory never set; it is always present to shine on the minds of those who desire it; its power is always there for those whose minds have

been illuminated and who meditate day and night on the Sacred Scriptures, like the one who is said to have received a blessing in the sacred psalm: “It is a blessing for a man not to have followed the advice of atheists or put his feet on paths that sinners walk, or sat to chat with sneering friends, and who finds his pleasure in the Master’s law and who meditates on that law day and night.”

In addition, my friends, the God who first set up this feast for us allows us to celebrate it every year. The one who handed over his son to death for our rescue gives us this feast from the same motive, and it is commemorated every year. This feast guides us through the hardships that meet us in this world. God now gives us the joy of rescue that shines out of this feast, as he brings us together to form a community, and unites us all spiritually in every place, allowing us to pray together and offer a unified act of gratitude, as is our duty on the feast. That is the marvel of his love; he gathers to the feast those who are far apart, and brings together in the unity of faith those who are perhaps physically separated from each other.

Wait for me, says the Master; wait for the day that I will come back to life again. I will purify the lips of every people on that day, so that they will be able to call upon the Master’s name and unite in serving him.

When I am lifted up off the earth, I will draw everyone to myself. I will purify the lips of every people on that day, so that they will be able to call upon the Master’s name and unite in serving him.

Prayer

Dear Father, our source of life, since you know our weakness, may we reach out with joy to grasp your hand and walk more easily along your paths. 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

Numbers 20.1-13, 21.4-9

Then the whole community of the descendants of Israel came

into the Desert of Zin during the first month, and the people camped in Kadesh, where Miriam died and was buried.

But there was no water for the community, and they assembled before Moses and Aaron and revolted against him. “We should have died when our brothers died before YHWH!” they said. “Why have you brought YHWH’s community into this desert for us and our animals to die here? Why did you make us come out of Egypt to bring us to this horrible place? It is not somewhere where grain or figs or pomegranates grow; there is not even any water to drink!”

Moses and Aaron then left the assembly and went to the entrance of the Meeting Tent, where they prostrated themselves; and YHWH’s glory appeared to them; and YHWH told Moses, “Take the rod, and you and your brother Aaron assemble the community and speak to the rock in front of them, and it will yield water; and in this way, you are to bring water out of the rock for them, and provide a drink for the community and their animals.” So Moses took the rod from its place before YHWH, as he had commanded.

Then Moses and Aaron assembled the people in front of the rock, and he told them, “Listen now, you rebels! Are we to bring water for you out of this rock?” And he lifted his hand and struck the rock with his rod—twice; and water gushed out, and the community and their animals drank it.

But then YHWH told Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe me and show how holy I am in the presence of the descendants of Israel, you will not bring the community into the land I have given them.” This was the Water of Meribah, because the descendants of Israel rebelled against YHWH, and he showed his holiness among them.

They then continued their journey from Mount Hor by the Red Sea Road, to skirt the land of Edom; and the people became very disheartened on the way, and the people complained against God and Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no food and no water, and our souls loathe this worthless bread!” So YHWH sent fiery saraph serpents among the people, which bit them, and many of Israel’s people died.

At this, the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, because we spoke against YHWH and you; please pray to YHWH for him to remove these serpents from us!”

Then YHWH told Moses, "Make a saraph serpent, and fasten it to a pole; and then anyone who is bitten and looks at it will recover." So Moses made a bronze serpent and fastened it to a pole; and if anyone who had been bitten looked at the bronze serpent, he recovered.

Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life.

God sent his Son into the world to save the world, not condemn it, so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life.

Second Reading

*The Pastoral Constitution on the Church
by the Second Vatican Council*

Holy Scripture, with which the experience of the ages is in agreement, teaches the human family that human progress, though it is a great blessing for man, brings with it a great temptation. When the scale of values is disturbed, and evil becomes mixed with good, individuals and groups consider only their own interests, not those of others.

The result is that the world is not yet a home of true brotherhood, while the increased power of mankind already threatens to destroy the human race itself.

If it is asked how this unfortunate state of affairs can be set right, Christians state their belief that all human activity, in daily jeopardy through pride and disorderly self-love, is to find its purification and perfection in the cross and resurrection of the Prince.

Man, redeemed by the Prince and made a new creation in the Holy Spirit, can and must love the very things created by God, because he receives them from God and sees and reveres them as coming from the hand of God.

As he expresses his gratitude for them to his Benefactor, and uses and enjoys them in a spirit of poverty and freedom, he comes into true possession of the world as a person who has nothing and owns everything; "because everything is yours, and you are the Prince's and the Prince is God's."

The Word of God, through whom everything came into existence, himself became man and lived in the world of men. As perfect man, he has entered the history of the world, and taken it into himself

and brought it to unity as its head. He reveals to us that “God is love,” and at the same time teaches us that the fundamental law of human perfection, and therefore of the transformation of the world, is the new commandment of love.

He assures those who have faith in God’s love that the path of love is open to every man, and that the effort to restore universal brotherhood is not futile. At the same time, he warns us that this love is not simply to be searched out in great things, but even, and especially, in the ordinary circumstances of life.

He suffered death for all of us, even though we are sinners, and by his example he teaches us that we must also carry that cross which the material self and the world lay on the shoulders of those who exert themselves for peace and justice.

Since he was designated Master by his return to life, the Prince, to whom all power in heaven and on earth has been given, is still at work in men’s hearts through the power of his Spirit. Not only does he awaken in them a longing for the world to come, but by that very fact, he also inspires, purifies, and strengthens those generous desires by which the human family tries to make its own life more human and to achieve the same goal for the whole world.

There are many, varied gifts of the Spirit; he calls some to give overt testimony to the longing for a residence in heaven, and to keep this fresh in the minds of all mankind; he calls others to dedicate themselves to the service of men here on earth, and to prepare by this service the material for the kingdom of heaven.

Yet he makes everyone free, so that, as they repudiate their love of self and take up all earth’s resources into human life, everyone will be able to reach out to the future, when humanity itself will become an offering acceptable to God.

The Prince died for everyone, so that those who are alive will no longer live for themselves but for the one who died and came back to life for their sake.

He was put to death for our sins, and restored to life to restore us to God’s friendship, so that those who are alive will no longer live for themselves, but for the one who died and returned to life for their sake.

Prayer

Dear Master, please guide us in your gentle mercy, because if we are left to ourselves, we cannot do your will. 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.

Fifth Sunday in Lent

First Reading

Hebrews 1.1-2.4

In far-off ages, God spoke to our forefathers in fragments, in the multiform writings of the prophets; in the final age, our own day, he has spoken to us in his son, whom he made heir of everything, through whom he created the ages.

He is the resplendence of God's glory and the replica of his existence, sustaining the universe by the expression of his power; and once he had removed the contamination of sin, he took up his throne in the heavens by the side of the Majesty, and became in this as much more mighty than angels as the name he inherits is greater than theirs.

Was ever any angel told, "You are my son; today is the day I father you"? or "I will be father to him, and he will be son to me"? And when he brings the first born again into the world, he says, "And all God's angels are to worship him." Of the angels themselves, he says, "He is fashioning spirits, winds, for his angels and messengers; flames for his servitors"; while of the son, "Your throne, my God, exists for age upon age, the scepter of high principle is the scepter of your kingdom. You love integrity and hate dishonesty, and for this the God who is your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness far surpassing your companions." and "YHWH, you set the earth on its foundations from the beginning, and the skies are an artifact from your hands. They will be no more, while you remain; they will wear out like clothes, and you will roll them up like a cloak, like a tunic, and they will be transformed; but you are the same and your years will never come to a term."

And did he say this to any angel: "Sit enthroned beside me

while I make your enemies a stool for your feet”? No; they are all servant spirits sent to wait on him for the rescue of those who are to receive the inheritance.

This is why we must meditate with careful attention on what we have heard, and not let it simply flow past our ears. If the message spoken by angels was authoritative and every infraction or violation of it received its due penalty, how will we escape the consequences of ignoring something so important as our rescue, which was originally spoken by the Master and attested to by those who heard him—and even confirmed by God in the miracles, supernatural events, the numerous manifestations of power, and the distribution of the Holy Spirit as God saw fit?

Jesus the Prince, the radiance of the Father’s glory and the full expression of his reality, keeps everything in existence by the power of his utterance. He washed us clean of our sins, and now he has taken his place in heaven at the right of God in his majesty.

Our faith rests on Jesus, who endured the cross for the sake of the joy that lay in front of him, and now he has taken his place in heaven at the right of God in his majesty.

Second Reading

An Easter letter by St. Athanasius

The Word who became everything for us is close to us; he is our Master Prince Jesus, who promises to remain with us forever. He calls out, “You see, I am with you for all the days of this age.” He is himself the shepherd, the high priest, the way, and the door, and has become everything at once for us. In the same way, he has come among us as our feast and holy day also. The blessed Emissary says of the one who was awaited, “The Prince has been sacrificed as our Passover.”

It was the Prince who shed his light on the psalmist as he prayed, “You are my joy; set me free from those who are all around me.” True joy, genuine celebration, means driving out evil, and to achieve this, a person must live a life of perfect goodness and, in the serenity of awed reverence for God, practice contemplation in his heart.

This was the conduct of the saints, who in their lifetime and at every stage acted as though they were celebrating a feast. Blessed David, for example, rose at night not once but seven times to win God’s favor through prayer. The great Moses was full of joy as he sang God’s praise

in hymns of victory for the defeat of Pharaoh and the oppressors of the Hebrew people. Others had hearts always filled with happiness as they performed their sacred duty of worship, like the great Samuel and Elijah. Because of their holy lives, they gained freedom, and now are celebrating in heaven. They are full of joy after their pilgrimage in shadows, and can now distinguish the reality from the promise.

When we celebrate the feast in our own day, what path are we to take? As we draw near this feast, who is to be our guide? My friends, it is to be no one else than the one whom you will address with me as our Master Prince Jesus. He says, "I am the way," as Blessed John tells us; it is the Prince who "rids the world of its sin." It is he who purifies our souls, as the prophet Jeremiah says, "Stand at the crossroads; look and see which is the good path, and you will find in it the way of transformation of your souls."

In earlier times, the blood of goats and the ashes of a calf were sprinkled on those who were defiled; but they were able only to purify the body. Now, through the grace of God's Word, everyone is made perfectly clean. If we follow the Prince closely, we will be permitted, even on this earth, to stand, so to speak, at the threshold of the heavenly Jerusalem, and enjoy the contemplation of that everlasting feast, like the blessed Emissaries, who in following the Savior as their leader showed—and still show—the way to obtain the same gift from God. They said, "Look at us; we have left everything and followed you!" We too follow the Master, and we keep this feast by actions rather than words.

For our sake, Jesus went before us into heaven, and he has become like Melchizedek, a high priest forever.

This is God's lamb, who rids the world of its sins; and he has become like Melchizedek, a high priest forever.

Prayer

Dear Father, please help us to be like your son the Prince, who loved the world and died to rescue us; please inspire us by his love and guide us by his example, since he is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God through all the ages of ages. Amen.


*First Reading**Hebrews 2.5-18*

It was not, remember, to angels God subjected the world that is to come, which is our topic here. Evidence for this comes from what is said somewhere, “What is a human being for you to recall him, or the son of a human being for you to care about him? You made him for a short time less than angels; you crowned him with glory and honor; you made everything his subject, under his feet.”

In making everything subject to him, he left nothing outside his control. At the moment, however, we do not see everything being obedient to him. But we do see Jesus, the one who “became for a short time less than the angels,” and who was, by his suffering and death, “crowned with glory and honor,” so that he would taste death to bring the favor of God upon everything.

That is, it was appropriate that the one for whom everything exists and by whom everything exists would, in the act of leading many children to glory, complete the act by the suffering of the primary leader of their rescue; because the one who makes holy and those who are made holy come all from a single source. And this is the reason why he is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters: “I will announce your name to my brothers; I will sing your praise in their gathering”; and also “I will exist in belief in him”; and again, “Here am I with the children God has given me.”

And since the “children” all have blood and flesh in common, he too took an equal share of it, so that by his death he could nullify the power of the one who controls death, the devil, and set free those who through fear of death were enslaved their whole lives long.

That is, he is clearly not concerned with angels; he is “concerned with the descendants of Abraham.” And it follows that it was appropriate for him to be like his brothers in every way, for him to be a merciful and faithful high priest in God’s service, to win forgiveness for the sins of the people. It is because he has suffered trouble that he can assist those who are troubled.

The Prince who makes men holy and the men who are made holy are of

the same ancestry. He had to become like his brothers in every respect in order to be their sympathetic and faithful high priest.

God was seen on earth; he lived among men in order to be their sympathetic and faithful high priest.

Second Reading *Commentary on the Psalms by St. John Fisher*

Our high priest is Prince Jesus, our sacrifice is that priceless body of his which he immolated on the altar of the cross for the rescue of every human being.

The blood that was shed for our redemption was not that of goats or calves (as in the old law), but that of the supremely innocent Lamb, Prince Jesus our Savior.

The temple in which our high priest offered sacrifice was not made by hands; it was built by the power of God alone. That is, he shed his blood in the sight of the world, a temple constructed by no one's hand but that of God. The temple, however, has two parts, the first of which is the earth, which we inhabit, while the second is still unknown to us mortals.

The Prince first offered sacrifice here on earth, when he underwent his supremely bitter death. Then, dressed in the new clothing of immortality, with only his blood he entered the holy place of all holy places, or in other words, heaven. There, he also presented to the throne of the heavenly Father that blood of immeasurable price which he had poured out seven times on behalf of every human being subject to sin.

This sacrifice is so pleasing and acceptable to God that, as soon as he saw it, he was obliged immediately to have pity on us and extend forgiving mercy to everyone who is truly repentant. Further, it is eternal. It is offered not only every year (as with the Jews), but even every day for our consolation—and in fact, at every hour and moment as well, so that we will have the strongest reason for taking heart. That is why the Emissary adds, "He has secured an eternal redemption."

Everyone who has embarked upon true contrition and change of heart for the sins he has committed, and is firmly resolved not to commit sins again for the future and to persevere constantly in that pursuit of virtues which he has now begun becomes a sharer in this holy and eternal sacrifice. St. John sets this before us in these words: "My little children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin; but if anyone

does sin, we have a Patron with the Father, Prince Jesus the Virtuous. And he is the atonement for our sins, and not only for our sins but for those of the whole world.”

If, when we were his enemies, we were brought into harmony with God by the death of his Son, then now that we are his friends, we can be even more sure that we will be saved by the life of his Son.

When we were still sinners, the Prince died for us; then now that we are his friends, we can be even more sure that we will be saved by the life of his Son.

Prayer

Father of love, and source of all blessings, please help us to pass from our old life of sin to the new life of grace, and prepare us for the glory 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

Hebrews 3.1-19

And for this reason, my sacred brothers and sisters who have a part in heaven’s call, pay attention to Jesus, heaven’s emissary, the high priest of the belief we share, since he is faithful to the one who appointed him, in the same way as “Moses was faithful in the whole of God’s house.”

In fact, he deserves as much more respect than Moses as the builder of a house than the house; every house was built by someone, and the builder of everything is God. And “Moses was faithful in the whole of his house” as a “servant,” to indicate what was to be spoken later; but the Prince was faithful as a son over his own house—and we are his house if we keep hold of hope’s composure and confidence.

And this means, as the Holy Spirit says, “If you hear his voice today, do not harden your hearts like the rebels on the day of their trouble in the desert, when your ancestors tried to force my hand, though they had seen me act for forty years. That was why I was bitter

toward that crowd, and said ‘They are always wandering off in their hearts, and have not known my ways.’ and so I swore in my rage, ‘They will never enter my rest.’”

Be careful, my brothers and sisters, not ever to let there be in you an evil, skeptical heart that wanders away from the living God; encourage each other every day while it is called “today,” to keep any of you from hardening into the self-deception of sin. We have become partners with the Prince if we keep secure our first foundation to the end, during the time when it says, “if you hear his voice today do not harden your hearts as the rebels did.”

Who, in fact, are the rebels who heard his voice? Wasn’t it everyone who left Egypt with Moses? Who were the ones he was “bitter toward for forty years”? Who but the ones who sinned, whose carcasses fell to the ground in the desert? Who did he “swear would not enter his rest” if not the skeptics? And we can see that they could not enter it because of their skepticism.

The Prince looks after his Father’s house as a faithful son would; and we are that house.

Through him the whole fabric is bound together, and grows into a holy temple in the Master; and we are that house.

Second Reading

A Sermon by St. Leo the Great

Our understanding, which is illuminated by the Spirit of truth, should receive with purity and freedom of heart the glory of the cross as it shines in heaven and on earth. It should see with inner vision the meaning of the Master’s words, when he spoke of his imminent suffering: “The time has come for the Son of Man to show what he really is.” Afterward, he said, “Now my soul is in turmoil, and what am I to say? Father, rescue me from this moment? But I came just for this moment! Father, show how great your Son is!” When the voice of the Father came from heaven, and said, “I have shown how great he is, and I will again show how great he is,” Jesus reported to those around him, “That voice did not speak for my sake, it spoke for yours. Now is the crisis of the world; now is the time when the ruler of this world is to be driven into exile; and if I am lifted up off the ground, I will draw everything to myself.”

How marvelous is the power of the cross, and how unspeakably great is the glory of his suffering; here is the judgment passed on the world, the condemnation of the world, and the supremacy of the crucified Prince.

Master, you drew everything to yourself so that the devotion of all peoples in every place would be able to celebrate in a sacrament that became perfect and visible what was carried out in the one temple in Judea in vague foreshadowings.

Now there is a more distinguished order of Levites, a greater dignity for the rank of elders, and a more sacred anointing for the priesthood, because your cross is the source of every blessing, and the cause of all graces there are. Through the cross, the faithful receive strength out of weakness, glory from dishonor, and life from death.

The various sacrifices of animals exist no longer; the single offering of your body and blood is the fulfillment of all the different sacrificial offerings, because you are the true "Lamb of God; you rid the world of its sins." In yourself, you bring to perfection all mysteries, so that, in the same way as there is one sacrifice in place of all the other sacrificial offerings, there is also only one kingdom assembled from all the other peoples.

My dear friends, we should then acknowledge what St. Paul, the teacher of the Gentiles, acknowledged so joyously: "This is a saying you can trust, and give complete credence to: Jesus the Prince came into this world to save sinners."

God's kindness toward us is all the more wonderful because the Prince did not simply die for the virtuous or holy but for the evil and sinful and, though the divine nature could not be touched by the sting of death, he took to himself by his birth as one of us something he could offer on our behalf.

The power of his death confronted our death once. In the words of the prophet Hosea, "Death, I will be your death; Grave, I will bury you." By dying he submitted to the laws of the world below; by coming back to life, he destroyed them. He did away with the eternal character of death so as to make death a thing of time, not of eternity. "In the same way as everyone dies in Adam, everyone will be brought to life in the Prince."

The Prince has canceled the decree that was against us by nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the principalities and powers and made of them a public spectacle as he led them captive in his triumphal procession.

When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know what I AM. He disarmed the principalities and powers and made of them a public spectacle as he led them captive in his triumphal procession.

Prayer

Dear Master, please help us do your will so that your Church will grow and become faithful in your service. 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

Hebrews 6.9-20

We are convinced, however, that the better attitude, the one that has a grasp on its rescue, is what applies to you, friends, even if we have said what we just said. God is not so unjust as to overlook what you have done and the love you have shown for his name in the service you have performed and are still performing for his sacred people. But we would like each of you to show the same zeal for the acquisition of complete theoretical knowledge dealing with your hope, so that you will not be lazy, and will follow the model of those who by their faith and patience inherited the promises.

Notice that when God gave the promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater to swear by “he swore by himself, I will bless you with blessings and increase you with increase” and with this as the foundation of his patience, Abraham obtained the promise. Human beings swear by what is greater than themselves, and an oath is the confirmation that puts an end to any controversy. In this respect, God, who wished to show the heirs of the promise how consummate was the immutability of his intention, sealed it by an oath, for there to be two immutable things making it impossible for God to lie—so that we would have strong support as we run to seize upon the hope that is before us.

We have this hope as an anchor for our souls, one that is secure

and fixed, as we enter the inner recesses behind the veil where Jesus entered as our forerunner, when he became “a high priest forever in the line of Melchizedek.”

Jesus, our forerunner, has passed beyond the veil on our behalf; he has become a high priest forever, of the order of Melchizedek. He is alive and interceding for us for all eternity.

Because he can never lose his priesthood, there is no limit to his power to save everyone who comes to God through him. He is alive and interceding for us for all eternity.

Second Reading *A Commentary on the Psalms by St. Augustine*

God could give no greater gift to men than to make his Word, through whom he created everything, their head, and to join them to him as cells in his body, so that the Word would be both Son of God and son of man, one God with the Father, and one man with every man. The result is that when we speak with God in prayer, we do not separate the Son from him, and when the body of the Son prays, it does not separate its head from itself; it is the one Savior of his body, our Master, Prince Jesus, the Son of God, who prays for us and in us and is himself the object of our prayers. He prays for us as our priest, he prays in us as our head, and he is the object of our prayers as our God.

Let us then recognize both our voice in his, and his voice in ours. When something is said, especially in prophesy, about the Master Prince Jesus that seems to belong to a degraded condition unworthy of God, we must not hesitate to ascribe this condition to one who did not hesitate to unite himself to us. Every creature is his slave, because it was through him that every creature came into existence.

We contemplate his glory and divinity when we listen to these words: “In the beginning, there was the Word, and the Word was face to face with God, and the Word was God. He was in existence in the beginning, face to face with God. Everything came into being through him, and without him there came to be not even one thing that came into existence.” Here we gaze on the divinity of the Son of God, something supremely great, which surpasses all the greatness of his creatures. Yet in other parts of Scripture, we hear him as a person sobbing, praying, giving praise and showing gratitude.

We hesitate to attribute these words to him, because our minds are slow to come down to this low level when we have just been contemplating him in his divinity. It is as though we were doing him an injustice by acknowledging in a man the words of one we spoke with when we prayed to God; we are usually at a loss and try to change the meaning. Yet our minds find nothing in Scripture that does not go back to him, and nothing that will allow us to wander off from him.

Our thoughts must then be awakened to keep alert in their faith. We must realize that the one whom we were contemplating a short time earlier in his nature as God took upon himself the nature of a slave; he turned into what is the same as a human being and was to all appearances a man like everyone else; and he lowered himself so far as to be obedient even to accepting death. As he hung on the cross, he made the psalmist's words his own: "My God! My God! Why have you left me alone?"

We pray to him as God; he prays for us as a slave. In the first instance, he is the Creator, and in the second a creature. Even though he is unchanged in himself, he took upon himself our created nature in order to change it, and made us one human being with himself, the head and the body. And so we pray to him, through him, and in him, and we speak along with him and he along with us.

Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask, and you will receive what you ask, so that your joy will be complete.

I promise you that the Father will give you anything you ask for in my name. Ask, and you will receive what you ask, so that your joy will be complete.

Prayer

Dear Father of mercy, please listen to the prayers of your penitent children who call out to you in love, and illuminate our minds and sanctify our hearts. 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**Hebrews 7.1-10*

Now this man “Melchizedek, the King of Salem, priest of God, the Supreme Being, met Abraham as he was returning from the massacre of the kings, and blessed him”; and “Abraham” gave him “a tenth of everything.”

First of all, to translate his name, he is “King of Integrity,” and secondly, he is “King of Salem,” or “King of Peace.” He is fatherless, motherless, with no pedigree, without any beginning for his reign or end for his life; and analogously to the Son of God, he remains a priest throughout all time.

Further, notice his status, if Abraham, the Patriarch, gave him a tenth of the spoils of the battle. The descendants of Levi who assume the priesthood have a command whereby they legally lay an assessment of a tenth on the people—that is, on their brothers and sisters, even though those brothers trace their ancestry back to Abraham.

But the one who has no pedigree tithed Abraham, and blessed the one who received the promises; and there can be no denying that it is inferiors who are blessed by superiors. So in the one case tithes are received by human beings who die; in the other by someone where the evidence is that he is alive; you might even say that even Levi, who received the tithes, paid the tithe through Abraham, since he was still in his ancestor’s body when “Melchizedek met him.”

Melchizedek, the king of Salem, offered bread and wine. He was priest of the Supreme God, like the Prince, the Son of God, to whom the Master has sworn the oath, “You are a priest forever, in the line of ancient Melchizedek.”

He became a priest, not in virtue of a law dealing with physical descent, but by the power of an indestructible life, to whom the Master has sworn the oath, “You are a priest forever, in the line of ancient Melchizedek.”

*Second Reading**The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church
by the Second Vatican Council*

“Now the days are coming, says the Master, when I will make a new Treaty with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. . . . I will plant my law within them and engrave it in their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people. . . . Everyone will know me, from the most insignificant to the most important, says the Master.”

It was the Prince who made this new Treaty, the new Treaty in his blood, and called into being, from Jews and Gentiles, a people that was to form a unity in the Spirit, not in a human sense, as the new people of God. Those who believe in the Prince, who are reborn through the word of the living God from incorruptible seed, not seed which decays, from water and the Holy Spirit, not materially, are constituted as the time becomes complete as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people God has made his own . . . once no people but now the people of God.”

This messianic people has the Prince as its head: the Prince, “who was handed over for our sins and came back to life again for our virtue.” And since he now bears the name that is above every name, he is reigning in glory in heaven. His people enjoy the dignity and freedom of the children of God, in whose hearts the Holy Spirit dwells as if he were living in a temple. They have as their law the new commandment of loving as the Prince has himself loved us; they have as their goal the kingdom of God, which was begun on earth by God himself and is destined to grow until it is also brought to completion by him at the end of time, when the Prince, our life, will appear, and “creation itself will be freed from slavery to decay and will take on the freedom of the glory of God’s children.”

This messianic people, then, though it does not in fact include all mankind and often seems to be a tiny flock, is still the enduring source of unity, hope, and rescue for the whole human race. It is established by the Prince as a communion of life, love, and truth; it is also used by him as an instrument for the redemption of everyone, and is sent out into the whole world as the light of the world and the earth’s salt.

Ancient Israel was already called the Church or community of God while it was on pilgrimage through the desert. And so the new

Israel, as it makes its way in this present age, looking for a city that is to come—a city that will endure—is also known as the Church of the Prince, because he earned it with his own blood, filled it with his Spirit, and equipped it with appropriate means to be a visible and social unity. God has assembled the community of those who in faith look on Jesus, the author of rescue and the source of unity and peace, and so has established the Church to be for each and every person the visible sacrament of this unity which brings rescue with it.

You are a people set apart. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people. Once you had no experience of God's mercy, but now it has been granted to you.

It is such a blessing for a people to have the Master as their God, to be the people he has chosen to be his own. Once you had no experience of God's mercy, but now it has been granted to you.

Prayer

Dear Master, please come to us, free us from the stains of our sins, help us to remain faithful to a holy way of life, and guide us to the inheritance you promised 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

Hebrews 7.11-28

Now then, if completeness were achieved through the Levitical priesthood—subjection to the Law, after all, came with it—then why would there be a need to establish a different priesthood “in the line of Melchizedek” and not to speak of a “priesthood in the line of Aaron”? Reestablishing the priesthood would necessarily involve the reestablishment of a law.

That is, the one this text speaks of belonged to a different tribe, from which no one ever served at an altar; it is perfectly obvious that our Master descended from Judah, from a tribe about which Moses said nothing dealing with priests. And it is a great deal clearer that if this

other priest is established by analogy with “Melchizedek,” he is someone who has not become a priest by a law that comes from a material commandment; his priesthood comes from the power of indestructible life; because the evidence is that “You are a priest forever in the line of Melchizedek.”

There is, then, an annulment of the previous commandment because of its weakness and uselessness—since the Law brought nothing to completion—and an inauguration of a superior hope by which we draw near to God.

And it did not even lack its oath. The others became priests without an oath; but this one assumed his priesthood backed by an oath, from what was said about him, “The Master has sworn it, and will not change his mind: You are a priest forever...” and in this way Jesus has become the guarantor of a superior Treaty.

Further, there was a plurality of the other priests, because death prevented them from continuing in office; but he holds his priesthood in perpetuity because he continues in existence eternally; from which it follows that throughout all time he can save those who draw near to God through him, since he is always alive to intervene on their behalf.

In other words, it is proper for us to have this sort of high priest: one who is holy, uncorrupt, undefiled, set apart from sinners, and elevated higher than the heavens; one who has no need, like the other high priests, of offering day by day sacrifices for his own sins as well as those of the people; he made his offering just one single time when he offered himself. What the Law appoints as high priests are human beings with weaknesses; the uttering of the oath which goes beyond the law appoints a Son, who has reached eternal perfection.

The Prince did not take upon himself the honor of becoming high priest; he received it from the One who said to him, “You are a priest forever in the line of ancient Melchizedek.”

No oath was taken when others were made priests, but the priesthood of Jesus was confirmed by the oath of God, who said to him, “You are a priest forever in the line of ancient Melchizedek.”

*Second Reading**A Treatise on Faith Addressed to Peter
by St. Fulgentius of Ruspe*

The sacrifices of animal victims which our forefathers were commanded to offer God by the Holy Trinity itself, the one God of the old and new Treaties, foreshadowed the most acceptable gift of all. This was the offering which in his kindness and condescension the only Son of God would make of himself in his human nature for our sake.

The Emissary teaches that the Prince “offered himself for us to God as a fragrant offering and sacrifice.” He is the true God and the true High Priest who for our sake entered the holy place of all holy places once for all, and took with him his own blood, not the blood for bulls and goats. This was foreshadowed by the high priest of ancient times when he took blood every year and entered the holiest place.

The Prince is therefore the one who embodied in himself alone all that he knew to be necessary to achieve our redemption. He is at once the high priest and the sacrifice, God and the Temple. He is the priest through whom we have been brought into harmony with God, the sacrifice by which we have achieved this harmony, the Temple in which this harmony was accomplished, and the God with whom we have been brought into harmony. He alone is priest, sacrifice and temple, because he is all these things as God in the form of a slave; but he is not alone as God, because he is this with the Father and the Holy Spirit in the form of God.

Hold tight to this and never doubt it: the only Son God ever fathered, God the Word, became man and offered himself to God for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice. In the time of the Old Treaty, patriarchs, prophets, and priests sacrificed animals in his honor, and in honor of the Father and the Holy Spirit as well; but now in the time of the New Treaty, the holy Catholic Church throughout the world never stops offering the sacrifice of bread and wine, in faith and love, to him and the Father and the Holy Spirit, with whom he shares one divinity.

Those animal sacrifices foreshadowed the flesh of the Prince which he would offer for our sins, though he was himself without sins, and the blood which he would pour out to achieve our sins’ forgiveness. In this sacrifice there is gratitude for and recollection of the body of the Prince that he offered for us and the blood that the same God shed for us. On this St. Paul says in the Acts of the Emissaries, “Keep a watch on

yourselves and the whole flock over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as overseers to rule the Church of God, which he won for himself by his blood.”

Those sacrifices pointed in a symbolic way to what was to be given to us. In this sacrifice, we see plainly what has already been granted us. Those sacrifices foretold the death of the Son of God for sinners; in this sacrifice he is proclaimed as already slaughtered for sinners, as the Emissary testifies: “The Prince died for evil people at a time when we were still powerless, and when we were enemies we were brought into harmony with God through the death of his Son.”

Once you were estranged from God, at enmity with him in heart and mind, and your deeds were evil; but now by the Prince’s death in his mortal body, God has brought you into harmony with himself, so that he could welcome you into his presence as holy people, without the slightest impurity or imperfection.

God made the Prince’s sacrificial death the means of atoning for the sins of all believers; God has brought you into harmony with himself, so that he could welcome you into his presence as holy people, without the slightest impurity or imperfection.

Prayer

Dear Master, please bestow your forgiveness upon us and set us free from our enslavement to sin. 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

Hebrews 8.1-13

And the main point of what we have been saying is that this is the sort of high priest we have, one who is enthroned beside the Majesty in the heavens, who performs his public service in the real Tent which was set up by the Master, not by some human being.

Now every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; hence this one must necessarily have something to offer.

Of course, if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests here who offer gifts as the Law prescribes; but their acts of worship are facsimiles or shadows of what is in heaven, as is shown by the fact that as Moses was about to erect the Tent, he was instructed, “See to it that you make everything following the pattern shown you on the mountain.”

But the fact is that our priest has a public service assigned him which is as much better than that one as the Treaty he has negotiated is superior to it, and as the promises on which it was established are superior.

That is, if the first Treaty had been flawless, there would be no room for a second one; and in fact, God points out the flaw when he says, “‘The days are now coming,’ says YHWH, ‘when I will enter into a new Treaty with the house of Israel and the house of Judah; not like the Treaty I made with their fathers on the day I took them by the hand to lead them from the land of Egypt; because they broke my Treaty, ‘and I stopped caring about them,’ says YHWH. ‘This is the Treaty I will make with the house of Israel after that time,’ says YHWH: ‘I will place my Laws in their minds and write them upon their hearts, and I will be their God, and they will be my people; and they will no longer teach their fellows and brothers will no longer tell brothers, “Know the Master,” because everyone will know me, from the least to the most important of them; because I will have pity on their dishonest deeds, and I will never again recall their sins.’”

In speaking of a “new” Treaty, he has abrogated the first one; and what has been abrogated is out of date and has all but lost its reality.

We have a high priest who serves in the real sanctuary; he has taken his throne in the heavens at the right of the throne of the divine Majesty to appear before God on our behalf.

Jesus did not enter a man-made sanctuary, a mere copy of the real one; he entered heaven itself to appear before God on our behalf.

Second Reading

A Homily by St. Gregory Nazianzen

We are soon going to participate in the Passover, and, though we still do so only in a symbolic way, the symbolism already has more

clarity than it had in earlier times, because under the Law, the Passover was—if I may dare to say it—a symbol of a symbol. Before long, however, when the Word drinks the new wine with us in his Father's Kingdom, we will be keeping the Passover in a still more perfect way, and with deeper understanding. He will then reveal to us and clarify what he has only partially disclosed so far. The reason is that this wine, which is so familiar to us now, is eternally new.

It is for us to learn what this drinking is, and for him to teach us. He has to communicate this knowledge to his students, because teaching is food, even for the teacher.

So we should take part in the Passover prescribed by the law, but not in a literal way, but in accordance with the teaching of the Good News; in a perfect way, not imperfectly; eternally, not simply for a time. We should think of the heavenly Jerusalem as our home, not the earthly one; the city should be the one that is glorified by angels, not the one that has been demolished by armies. We are not required to sacrifice young bulls or rams, which are animals with horns and hoofs that are more dead than alive and have no feeling; we should instead join the choirs of angels in offering God on his heavenly altar a sacrifice of praise.

We must now pass through the first veil and approach the second, and turn our eyes toward the holiest of all holy places; I will say more than this; we must sacrifice ourselves to God every day and in everything we do, and accept everything that happens to us for the sake of the Word, and so imitate his suffering by our sufferings, and honor his blood by shedding our own. We must be ready to be crucified.

If you are a Simon from Cyrene, take your cross and follow the Prince. If you are crucified beside him like one of the thieves, then, like the good thief, acknowledge your God now. It was for your sake, and because of your sin, that the Prince was himself regarded as a sinner; and so it should be for his sake that you are to stop sinning. Worship the one who was hanged on the cross because of you, even if you are hanging there yourself. Derive some benefit even from the disgrace; buy rescue with your death, and enter paradise with Jesus, and discover how far you have fallen. Contemplate the glories there, and leave the other sneering thief to die outside in his blasphemy.

If you are a Joseph of Arimathea, go to the one who ordered his crucifixion and ask for the Prince's body. Make your own the

atonement of the sins of the whole world. If you are a Nicodemus, like the man who worshiped God during the night, bring spices and prepare the Prince's body for burial. If you are one of the Marys or Salome or Joanna, weep in the early dawn. Be the first to see the stone rolled back, and even perhaps the angels and Jesus himself.

Jesus died outside the city gate to sanctify the people by his own blood. Let us go to him outside the camp and share the insult that was heaped upon him.

You have not yet resisted sin to the point of shedding your blood. Let us go to him outside the camp and share the insult that was heaped upon him.

Prayer

Dear God, our Father, since you are always working to save us, and now we are filled with happiness in the great love you give to your chosen people, please protect everyone who is about to become a child of yours, and continue to bless those who have already been Bathed. 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.



Salv Sunday

First Reading

Hebrews 10.1-18

In other words, the Law, which was but a shadow of the benefits to come and not the counterpart of the actual reality, can never bring to completion those who come to it year after year with the sacrifices they keep offering; otherwise, wouldn't they have stopped being offered, because no one among those worshipers who had been purified would any longer have any consciousness of having sinned? In them, however, there is, year after year, a recalling of having sinned; because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to remove sins.

And that is why, when the Prince came into the world, he said, "You want no sacrifice or offering, but you fashioned a body for me; holocausts and sin reparations give you no pleasure. But then I said, 'I am here; I have come; At the very beginning of the book it was written of me that I would do your will, my God.'"

When he says in the first part, "you do not want and are not pleased with sacrifices and offerings and holocausts and sin reparations," which are brought to him following the Law's regulations, and "then," he declares, "I am here; I have come to do your will," he has nullified the first part to establish the second; and it is in this "will" that we have become holy because of the offering of the body of Prince Jesus that one single time.

Further, every priest performs his service day after day, again

and again offering the same sacrifices which never can remove sins. He, however, offered a single sacrifice for sins for all time, and now is “seated on his throne beside God,” waiting only “until he makes his enemies a stool for his feet.” One single offering brings to perfection those who are to be made holy.

And the Holy Spirit gives proof of this; after saying, “‘This is the treaty I will make with them,’ says YHWH, ‘after that time: I will place my Laws in their hearts, and I will engrave them on their minds; and I will remember no longer their sins and their violations of the law.’”

Where there is a removal of these things, there is no longer any offering for sin.

You had no desire for sacrifice and offerings, but you prepared a body for me; holocausts for sins did not please you, and so I said, “I am here, Master God; I have come to do your will.”

The blood of bulls and goats could never remove sins. When the Prince came into the world, he said, “I am here, Master God; I have come to do your will.”

Second Reading

A Sermon by St. Andrew of Crete

Let us go together to meet the Prince on the Mount of Olives. He returns today from Bethany and proceeds of his own free will toward his holy, blessed suffering, to bring to completion the mystery of our rescue. The one who came down from heaven to raise us from the depths of sin, and to lift us, along with himself, as we are told in Scripture, above “every ruler, authority, and power, and every other name that can be named,” is now coming of his own free will to make his journey to Jerusalem. He is coming without pomp or ostentation; as the psalmist says, “he will not argue or raise his voice to shout in the streets.” He will be unassuming and humble, and he will make his entry with simplicity.

Let us run to be with him as he speeds along toward his suffering, and imitate those who met him then, but not by covering his path with clothes, olive branches, or palms, but by doing all we can to prostrate ourselves before him by being humble and trying to live as he would wish. Then we will be able to receive the Word at his coming, and God, whom no limits can contain, will be inside us.

In his humility, the Prince entered the dark regions of our fallen

world, and he is happy to have become so insignificant for our sake, and glad that he came and lived among us and shared our nature to lift us up again to himself. And even though we are told that he has now risen above the highest of the heavens, which is obviously the proof of his power and divinity, his love for mankind will never rest until he has raised our earthbound nature from glory to glory, and made it one thing with his own in heaven.

So let us not spread before his feet clothes or lifeless olive branches, which are pleasant to look at for a few hours and then wither, but ourselves, dressed in his grace—or rather, dressed completely in him. Those of us who have been bathed into the Prince must be ourselves the clothes we spread in front of him. Now that the crimson stains of our sins have been washed off in the saving waters of the Bath, and we have become as white as pure wool, let us present the conqueror of death with the real rewards of his victory, not with mere palm branches. Let our souls take the place of the welcoming branches as we join today in the children's holy song, "Praise the one who is coming in the Master's name! Praise the King of Israel!"

When the people heard that Jesus was entering Jerusalem, they went out to meet him; many of them spread their cloaks in front of him, while others took branches from the trees, as they cried, "Hosanna to David's son! Praise the one who is coming in the Master's name!"

The crowd that went ahead of him and the crowd that followed him cried, "Hosanna to David's son! Praise the one who is coming in the Master's name!"

Prayer

Omnipotent and eternally living God, since you have given the human race Prince Jesus our Savior as a model of humility, and since he fulfilled your will by becoming man and giving up his life on the cross, please help us to give evidence to what you are by following his example of suffering, and make us fit to share in his return to 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**Hebrews 10.19-39*

And so, brothers and sisters, since we have the reassurance that we can enter the sanctuary in the blood of Jesus, which created a freshly-opened, living way for us through the veil—that is, through his materiality—and since we have such a great priest over the house of God, let us approach him with true hearts full to the brim with faith, for our hearts to be sprinkled to clean our soiled consciences, and our bodies to be washed in pure water. And let us keep firm possession of the belief we share in our hope, because the one who gave us the promise is faithful; and let us come to know each other so that we can stimulate each other to love and good deeds. and not neglect meeting together, as some do; we should support each other all the more as we see the Day drawing closer.

And notice that if we sin deliberately after we have received knowledge of what the facts are, there is no further sacrifice for sin, and only the terrifying prospect of some sort of sentence, and the raging fire which is to consume God's enemies. Anyone who violates the Law of Moses "dies" without mercy when his crime is established "by two or three witnesses"; how much worse a punishment do you think will be deserved by the person who has slammed the door on the Son of God, profaned the blood of the New Treaty by which he became sacred, and insulted the Spirit of generosity and liberality? We know that he is the one who said, "Vengeance belongs to me; I will pay back those who deserve it," and "YHWH will be the judge of his people"; it is a fearsome thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Remember the early days when you received the light and lasted through a prolonged struggle with suffering, sometimes being publicly exposed to disgrace and torture, and sometimes joining in with others treated in the same way; you suffered along with the prisoners, and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your possessions, since you realized that you owned greater property that would remain with you.

Do not throw away this assurance of yours which has such a great reward; what you need is perseverance, to keep doing the will of God and earning the promise. There is still "a little while and the one

who is to come will arrive, without delay; and one with my kind of virtue will live from faith,” but “if he slips out from under it, my soul will find no pleasure in him.”

No, we are not those who slip out from under our faith toward ruin; we are faithful for the preservation of our souls.

Never lose heart. If you wish to receive what God has promised, you must have the patience to do his will.

Stand firm and you will be saved; you must have the patience to do his will.

Second Reading

A Sermon by St. Augustine

The suffering of our Master and Savior Prince Jesus is the hope of glory and a lesson in patience.

Is there anything the hearts of believers dare not promise themselves as the gift of God’s grace, when for their sake God’s only Son, coeternal with the Father, was not simply content to be born as man from human ancestry, but even died at the hands of the men he created?

It is a great thing that we are promised by the Master, but what has already been done for us is far greater; and this is what we are now recalling. Where were the sinners when the Prince died for them? What were they? When the Prince has already given us the gift of his death, can anyone doubt that he will give the sacred people the gift of his own life? Why does human weakness hesitate to believe that mankind will one day live with God?

Who is the Prince but the Word of God: “In the beginning, there was the Word, and the Word was face to face with God, and the Word was God”? This Word of God “became flesh and made his home among us.” He had no power in himself to die for us; he had to take from us our mortal flesh. This was the way in which, even though he was immortal, he was able to die; the way in which he chose to give life to mortal men: he would first have a share in us, and then enable us to share in him. In ourselves, we had no power to live, and he did not have in himself the power to die. And so, he brought about a marvelous exchange with us, through mutual sharing; we gave him the power to die, and he will give us the power to live.

The death of our Master and God should not be something that is our disgrace; it should be our greatest hope, and our greatest glory. In taking upon himself the death that he found in us, he has promised with complete fidelity to give us life in him, a life we cannot have of ourselves.

He loved us so much that, though he was sinless himself, he suffered for us sinners the punishment that we deserved for our sins. And so how can he neglect to give us the reward we deserve for our virtue, since he is the source of virtue? How can the one whose promises are true neglect to reward the sacred, holy people when he took on himself the punishment of sinners, though he had no sin himself?

My brothers and sisters, we should admit without any fear, and even openly proclaim that the Prince was crucified for us; we should acknowledge it in joy and not fear, and proudly and not with embarrassment. The Emissary Paul saw the Prince, and raised his claim proudly; he had a great many inspired things to say about the Prince, but he did not say that he was proud of the Prince's wonderful deeds—in creating the world, since he was God with the Father, or in ruling the world, though he was also a man like us. No, he said, "I am not to be proud of anything except of the cross of our Master Prince Jesus."

We worship your cross, Master; we recall your glorious suffering. Please have mercy on us, since you endured so much for our sake.

Since you have redeemed us with your priceless blood, please listen to the prayers of your slaves and come to our help. Please have mercy on us, since you endured so much for our sake.

Prayer

Omnipotent God, please strengthen and protect us in our weakness by the suffering and death of your Son. 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**Hebrews 12.1-13*

And what all this means is that we too, who have surrounding us such a cloud of witnesses, should get rid of everything weighing us down, especially the sin which is always within easy reach, and run perseveringly the race which lies before us, with our eyes on Jesus, the front-runner and winner, who for the joy that was placed before him endured the cross and made nothing of disgrace, and now is seated on his throne beside God. Keep before your minds as your ideal the one who put up with so much antagonism toward himself from sinners, so that you will not tire or lose your enthusiasm.

In your struggle against sin, you have not yet held out till your blood is shed—and you have forgotten the encouragement given you when you were called “sons”: “My son, do not make light of YHWH’s corrections, or lose heart when you are punished by him; YHWH corrects those he loves, and spans every son he takes into his favor.”

You are being taught a lesson in what you are undergoing; God is treating you as sons. Was there ever a son with a father who did not correct him? If you experience no correction, which is something everyone experiences, you are illegitimate, not sons. Further, we all have material fathers who have corrected us, and we respected them; wouldn’t it be much more reasonable to submit to the Father of spirits and live? They corrected us for a short time for reasons that seemed good to them; he does it for our benefit, for us to share his holiness. Of course, every correction seems, at the time, painful and not enjoyable; but later it produces the peaceful harvest of virtue to those trained by it.

So “lift up your weary hands and toughen your feeble knees,” and “make the paths straight for” your “feet,” so that your lameness won’t twist an ankle and will heal.

Jesus, the beginning and end of our faith, endured the cross and paid no attention to its shame because of the joy that was to follow it. He is now seated at the right of the throne of God.

He humbled himself by showing obedience, even when this meant death. He is now seated at the right of the throne of God.

*Second Reading**The Holy Spirit by St. Basil*

When mankind was estranged from God our Savior by disobedience, he made a plan for raising us back up from our fall and restoring us to friendship with himself. According to this plan, the Prince came in the flesh, he showed us the way of life of the Good News, and suffered and died on the cross, and was buried and came back from the dead. He did this so that we could be saved by imitating him, and recover our original status as sons of God by adoption.

To attain holiness, then, we must not only pattern our lives on the Prince's by being gentle, humble, and patient, we must also imitate him in his death. When Paul took the Prince for his model, he said that he wanted to become like him in his death in the hope that he would also be brought back from death to life.

We imitate the Prince's death by being buried with him by the Bath. If we ask what this kind of burial means and what benefit we can hope to derive from it, it means, first of all, making a complete break with our former way of life, and our Master himself said that this cannot be done unless a man is born again. In other words, we have to begin a new life, and we cannot do so until our previous life has been brought to an end. When runners reach the turning point on a racetrack, they have to stop briefly before they can go back in the opposite direction; and so when we want to reverse the direction of our lives, there must be a pause, or a death, to mark the end of one life and the beginning of another.

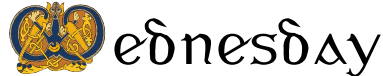
Our descent into the world below takes place when we imitate the Prince's burial by our Bath. The bodies of those who are bathed are in a sense buried in the water as a symbol of their renunciation of the sins of their unregenerate nature. As the Emissary says, "The circumcision you have undergone is not an operation performed by human hands; it is the complete stripping away of your unregenerate nature. This is the circumcision that the Prince gave us, and it is accomplished by our burial with him in the Bath." The Bath washes the soul clean of the pollution of worldly thoughts and inclinations: "You will wash me," says the psalmist, "and I will be whiter than snow." We receive this saving Bath only once, because there was only one death and one return to life for the rescue of the world; and the Bath is its symbol. By being bathed into Jesus the Prince, we have all shared in his death.

We became united with him by dying as he did; and so we will be one thing with him in rising to new life also.

By our Bath, we were buried with him; we shared in his death. We became united with him by dying as he did; and so we will be one thing with him in rising to new life also.

Prayer

Dear Father, may we please receive your forgiveness and mercy as we celebrate the suffering and death of the Master, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

Hebrews 12.14-29

Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will look upon the Master—and be on the alert to keep anyone from falling short of God’s favor, or the root of bitterness will send up a sprout of conflict, which will contaminate great numbers of people. And be sure that no one becomes as unfaithful or profane as Esau, who traded his rights as firstborn for one meal; you know that when he later tried to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, because there was no room for changing his mind, even though he tearfully looked for one.

You have not, in fact, come to a trackless place, on fire, dark, cloudy, and full of storms, with a trumpet blaring and a voice whose utterance made those who heard it beg not to have anything more said to them; they could not bear to hear the command, “If even an animal so much as touches the mountain, he is to be stoned.” The sight was so fearsome that even Moses said, “I am” quaking “in terror.” No, you have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to the celebration joined by millions of angels, the community of the firstborn citizens of heaven, to a judge who is God over everyone, to the spirits of virtuous people who have reached their goal, and to Jesus, who negotiated the new Treaty, and the blood sprinkled that speaks more powerfully than that of Abel.

Be careful not to abandon what it says. If the others did not escape when they abandoned the warnings of the one who spoke to them

on earth, much less will we if we turn away from the one speaking from heaven. His voice then shook the earth; but now he has promised, “Once more I will shake” not only “the earth” but “heaven.” And the “once more” indicates the removal of what is to be shaken as something crafted, so that what will remain is what does not shake. So let us be thankful for being given an unshakable kingdom, in which we can offer God proper worship, with reverence and awe; because our “God is a consuming fire.”

You heard God speaking from the darkness, and saw Mount Sinai, ablaze with fire; you came to Moses crying, “See how our God the Master has shown us his greatness and his glory!”

Now you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. See how our God the Master has shown us his greatness and his glory!

Second Reading

A Treatise on John by St. Augustine

My dear brothers and sisters, the Master has spelled out for us the complete love that we ought to have for each other. He tells us, “No one has greater love than the one who gives up his life for his friends.” In these words, the Master tell us what the perfect love we should have for each other involves. John, the evangelist who recorded them, draws the conclusion in one of his letters: “As the Prince gave up his life for us, we should give up our lives for our brothers and sisters also.” We should love each other in reality as we were loved by the one who gave up his life for us.

This is surely what we read in Solomon’s Proverbs: “If you sit to eat at a ruler’s table, notice carefully what is set in front of you; then reach out your hand, knowing that you must provide the same kind of meal yourself.” What is this ruler’s table if not the one at which we receive the body and blood of the one who gave up his life for us? What does it mean to sit at this table if not to approach it with humility? What does it mean to notice carefully what is set in front of you if not to meditate devoutly on such a great gift? What does it mean to reach out your hand, knowing that you must provide the same kind of meal yourself, if not what I have just said: that we must give up our lives for the our brothers and sisters, just as he gave up his life for us? This is what

the Emissary Paul said: "The Prince suffered for us and left us an example, for us to follow in his footsteps."

This is what is meant by "providing the same kind of meal." This is what the blessed martyrs did with such burning love. If we are to give true meaning to our celebration of their feast days, and to our approach to the Master's table in the very banquet at which they were fed, we must, like them, "provide the same kind of meal."

At this table of the Master, we do not commemorate the martyrs in the same way as we commemorate others who are resting in peace. We do not pray for the martyrs as we pray for those others; they pray for us instead, and pray that we will follow in their footsteps. They practiced the perfect love of which the Master said there could be none greater; they provided "the same kind of meal" as they had received themselves at the Master's table.

This must not be understood as saying that we can be the Master's equals by giving evidence to him to the extent of shedding our blood. He had the power to give up his life; and we, in contrast, cannot choose the length of our lives, and we die even if it is against our will. By dying, he destroyed death in himself; we are freed from death only in his death. His body did not see decay; our body will see decay and only be dressed in incorruption through him at the end of the world. He needed no help from us in saving us; without him, we can do nothing. He gave himself to us as a vine gives itself to the branches; apart from him we cannot have life.

Finally, even if brothers die for brothers, no martyr brings forgiveness by shedding his blood for the sins of his brothers, as the Prince brought forgiveness to us. In this, he gave us a reason for celebration, not an example to imitate. And so, to the extent that they shed their blood for their brothers, the martyrs provided "the same kind of meal" as they had received at the Master's table. Let us then love each other as the Prince loved us and gave himself up for us.

God showed his love for us by sending his only Son into the world to give us life through him. Since God has loved us so much, we should love each other too.

God loved us first, and sent his own Son to be the sacrifice that removes our sin. Since God has loved us so much, we should love each

other too.

Prayer

Dear Father, since in your plan of rescue, your Son Prince Jesus accepted the cross and freed us from the power of the enemy, may we please come to share the glory of his return to life, because he is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



*First Reading**Hebrews 4.14-5.10*

Yet since we have a great high priest who has passed through all the spheres in the sky, Jesus, the Son of God, let us keep our grip on the belief we share. We do not, remember, have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weakness, but one with all the same sorts of troubles we have, except for sin; and so we should approach the throne of his favor with confidence that we will find mercy and benevolence to help us at the proper moment.

Notice that every high priest selected from the human race is given the duty of acting on behalf of the human race in its relation to God, by making gifts and sacrifices for sins; and he can curb his indignation for ignorant and fickle people by the fact that he himself is enveloped in weakness—but because of this, he must make offerings for his own sins as well as those of the people. In addition, no one takes this honor on himself; it is only a person called by God, as Aaron was.

In this regard, not even the Prince elevated himself to the office of high priest; this was given him by the one who said, “You are my Son; today I have fathered you,” when he said in another place “You are a priest forever in the line of Melchizedek”; and he was the one who, in the days when he was in his body, sent pleas and appeals with loud sobbing and tears to the one who could save him from death; but he was listened to for his submissiveness, even though he was the Son; and he learned obedience from what he suffered. And after reaching the end, he became the cause of the eternal rescue of all those who obey him, since he was then designated by God high priest “in the line of Melchizedek.”

Though he was the Son of God, the Prince learned obedience through what he suffered; and now, for everyone who obeys him, he has become the source of eternal life.

In the days of his earthly life, he prayed and called out, and submitted so humbly that his prayer was heard. And now, for everyone who obeys him, he has become the source of eternal life.

Second Reading *An Easter Homily by St. Melito of Sardis*

There was a good deal announced by the prophets about the mystery of the Passover: That mystery is the Prince, to whom may glory come through all the ages of ages. Amen.

He came down from heaven to earth for the sake of suffering humanity; he clothed himself in that humanity in the Virgin's womb, and was born a man. And since he now had a body capable of suffering, he took the pain of fallen man upon himself, and won the battle over the diseases of soul and body that were its cause; and by his Spirit, which was incapable of dying, he dealt man's destroyer death a fatal blow.

He was led out like a lamb; he was slaughtered like a sheep. He ransomed us from our slavery to the world, in the same way as he had ransomed Israel from the land of Egypt; he freed us from our thralldom to the devil, in the same way as he had freed Israel from the hand of Pharaoh; he put on our souls the seal of his own Spirit, and on our bodies the seal of his own blood.

He is the one who covered death with frustration and drove the devil into mourning, in the same way as Moses drove Pharaoh into mourning. He is the one who struck a blow at sin and robbed evil of its children; he is the one who brought us out of slavery into freedom, out of darkness into light, out of death into life, and out of tyranny into an eternal kingdom; the one who made us a new priesthood, and a people chosen to be his own for ever. He is the Passover that rescues us.

It is he who endured every kind of suffering in all those who foreshadowed him; in Abel he was killed, in Isaac bound, in Jacob exiled, in Joseph sold, and in Moses exposed to die. He was sacrificed in the Passover lamb, persecuted in David, and dishonored in the prophets.

It is he who became man from the Virgin, and he who was hanged on the tree; he is the one who was buried in the ground, brought back to life, and taken into the heights of heaven; he is the mute

lamb, the slaughtered lamb, the lamb born from that beautiful ewe Mary. He was wrested away from the flock, dragged off to be slaughtered, sacrificed in the evening, and buried at night. But no bone of his was broken on the tree; and in the earth, his body knew no decay. He is the one who came back from death, and who lifted man up from the depths of the tomb.

Everyone has sinned and is deprived of God's glory; we are made virtuous through the free gift of his grace and through the redemption of Jesus the Prince. God made the Prince's sacrificial death the means of expiating the sins of all believers.

This is God's lamb, the one who rids the world of its sins. God made the Prince's sacrificial death the means of expiating the sins of all believers.

Prayer

God of infinite pity, since to love you is to become holy, please fill our hearts with your love, and since by the death of your Son you have given us hope born from faith, by his return to life please fulfill this hope in the perfect love of heaven, where he is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



*First Reading**Hebrews 9.11-28*

But then the Prince became high priest of the benefits that had come into being, and only one single time entered, through the greater and more perfect tent, not a man-made one—which is to say, not one on this earth—into the holy place, and took with him his own blood, not the blood of goats or calves, and so won eternal release from punishment.

Of course, if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled over those who were contaminated made them holy with a material purification, in a far greater sense the blood of the Prince, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself undefiled to God, will purify our consciences from deeds of death and allow us to worship the God who lives.

And it is for this reason that he is the negotiator of a new Treaty, or Will, so that once death occurs to ransom those who violated the first Treaty, the ones who were called could receive the promised eternal inheritance. That is, when there is a will, there must be evidence of the death of the testator; a will takes effect only at death, because it has no force as long as the testator is alive. Hence, even the First Treaty, as a Will, was not ratified without blood. That is, when all the commandments of the Law were promulgated by Moses to the whole people, he took the blood of calves with water and scarlet wool and the hyssop plant, and sprinkled the book and the whole people with it, while he said, “This is the blood of the Treaty which God has entered into with you.” Then in the same way he sprinkled with blood the tent and the utensils for worship. For practical purposes, it is by blood that everything is purified under the Law; and without shedding of blood no release from contamination occurs.

In any case, it had to be that the facsimiles of what is in the

heavens would be purified in this way; but what is in the heavens received purification through sacrifices superior to them. The Prince did not enter a man-made sanctuary, a symbol of the real one, he entered heaven itself, and now appears in the very presence of God on our behalf—but not to offer himself many times, as the high priest enters the sanctuary every year with the blood of something other than himself; if so, he would have had to undergo his suffering repeatedly from the beginning of the world. No, the fact is that he appeared one single time at the crucial moment of history for the removal of sin by the sacrifice of himself. And, in the same sense that it is the destiny of the human race to die only once, after which comes the judgment, in this sense the Prince was offered only once to carry on himself the sins of many, many others, and will appear a second time not to deal with sin, but with the rescue of those who are waiting for him.

Second Reading

Catecheses by St. John Chrysostom

If we want to understand the power of the Prince's blood, we should go back to the ancient account of its prefiguration in Egypt. "Sacrifice a lamb without defect," commanded Moses, "and sprinkle its blood on your doors." If we were to ask him what he meant, and how the blood of an irrational animal could possibly save human beings endowed with reason, his answer would be that the saving power does not lie in the blood itself, but in the fact that it is a sign of the Master's blood. In those days, when the destroying angel saw the blood on the doors, he did not dare to enter; and now when the devil sees the true blood on the lips of believers—doors of the Prince's Temple—not that prefiguring blood on the doors, he will be much, much less able to make an approach.

If you want further proof of the power of this blood, remember where it came from, how it ran down from the cross as it flowed from the Master's side. The Good News records that when the Prince was dead but still hung on the cross, a soldier came and pierced his side with a lance, and blood and water suddenly poured out. Now the water is a symbol of the Bath, and the blood a symbol of the holy eucharist. The soldier pierced the Master's side, he breached the wall of the sacred Temple, and I have found the treasure and made it my own. This is also true of the lamb; the Jews sacrificed the victim, and I have been saved by

it.

“There flowed from his side water and blood.” My friends, do not run through this secret without thought; it has still another meaning I will explain to you. I said that water and blood symbolize the Bath and the holy eucharist. From these two sacraments the Church is born: from the Bath, “the water that washes and gives birth and renewal through the Holy Spirit,” and from the holy eucharist. Since the symbols of the Bath and the eucharist flowed from his side, it was from his side that the Prince fashioned the Church, as he had fashioned Eve from the side of Adam. Moses gives a hint of this when he tells the story of the first man and makes him exclaim, “Bone from my bone! Flesh from my flesh!” As God then took a rib from Adam’s side to fashion a woman, the Prince has given us blood and water from his side to fashion the Church. God took the rib when Adam was in a deep sleep, and in the same way the Prince gave us the blood and water after his own death.

Do you understand, then, how the Prince has united his bride to himself and what food he gives us all to eat? By one and the same food, we are both brought into being and nourished. In the same way as a woman nourishes her child with her own blood and milk, the Prince constantly nourishes with his own blood those to whom he has himself given life.

The price of your redemption was not ephemeral gold or silver; it was the priceless shedding of the blood of the Prince, the lamb without any defect. And through him, in the one Spirit, we can approach the Father.

The blood of Prince Jesus washes all our sins away. And through him, in the one Spirit, we can approach the Father.

Prayer

Father, please look with love upon your people, the love which our Master Prince Jesus showed us when he let himself be taken by evil men and suffered the agony of the cross; because he is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.


*First Reading**Hebrews 4.1-13*

We should be afraid, then, as long as the promise of entering his rest stays with us, that some of you might be found to fall short. We have received good news like theirs; but merely hearing was of no use to them, because it did not merge with faith in the hearers.

Now those of us who have faith will be entering his rest; he says, “So I swore in my rage, “they will never enter my rest,”” even though his work was done when the world was set on its foundations. It says somewhere about the seventh day, “And God rested on the seventh day from all his work”; but here it says, “They will never enter my rest.”

Then since it is left for some to enter his rest, and the ones who earlier received the good news failed to enter it by their disobedience, he has once again set a limit of a day, “today,” when he said in David’s voice so long afterward, “If you hear his voice today, do not harden your hearts.” If Joshua had given them rest, he would not have spoken later of another day. So a Sabbath is left for God’s people; and one who enters his rest ceases his work just as God ceased his own work.

And we should be eager to enter this rest, to keep anyone from following their pattern and falling into disobedience; because what God has said is still alive and active, sharper than any two-edged sword; and it pierces so deep as to split soul and spirit, joint and marrow, as it evaluates the thoughts and intentions of the heart. No creature is hidden from his presence; everything is naked and exposed to the gaze of the one before whom we must present our case.

*Second Reading**An Ancient Homily on Holy Saturday*

Something strange is happening: there is a great silence on earth today, a great silence and stillness. The whole earth is silent because the King is asleep. The earth shook and is still because God has fallen asleep in his matter and he has brought back to life everyone who has slept ever since the world began. God has died materially and the hell is quaking with fear.

He has gone looking for our first parent, as if it were for a lost sheep. In his great desire to visit those who live in darkness and the

shadow of death, the one who is both God and the son of Eve has gone to free from their sorrow the captives Adam and Eve.

The Master approached them carrying the cross, the weapon that had won him the victory; and at the sight of him, Adam, the first man he had created, struck his breast in terror and cried out to everyone, "My Master be with all of you!" The Prince answered, "And with your spirit." He took him by the hand and raised him up, as he said, "Wake, sleeper, and come back to life, and the Prince will give you light.

"I am your God, the one who for your sake became your son. Out of love for you and for your descendants, I now by my own authority command all those who are held captive to come out, all those who are in darkness to come into the light, and all those who are sleeping to awake. I order you, sleepers, to waken. I did not create you to be held prisoner in hell. Come back to life, because I am life for the dead. Come back to life, work of my hands, created in my image. Come back to life and let us leave this place, because you are in me and I am in you; together we form only one person and we cannot be separated.

"It was for your sake that your God became your son; I, the Master, took the form of a slave; the one whose home is above the heavens came down to earth and even beneath the earth. For your sake, for the sake of mankind, I became like a man without help, free among the dead. For the sake of those of you who left the garden, I was betrayed to the Judeans in a garden, and I was crucified in a garden.

"See on my face the spittle I received to restore for you the life I once breathed into you. See there the marks of the blows I received to refashion your warped nature into my image. On my back see the whip marks I endured to remove the burden of sin the weighs upon your back. See my hands, nailed fast to a tree, for you, someone who once sinfully stretched out your hand to a tree.

"I slept on the cross and a sword pierced my side for you, someone who slept in paradise and produced Eve from your side. My side has healed the pain in yours. My sleep will rouse you from your sleep in the land below the earth. The sword that pierced me has sheathed the sword that was turned against you.

"Waken now, and let us leave this place. The enemy led you out of the earthly paradise; I will not restore you to that paradise, but I will give you a throne in heaven. I forbade you to eat from the tree that

was only a symbol of life, but now you see that the one who is life itself is one thing with you. I set cherubim to guard you in the way slaves are guarded, but now I am making them worship you as God. The throne formed by the cherubim is waiting for you, and its bearers are swift and prompt. The bridal chamber is decorated, the banquet is ready, the eternal rooms are prepared, the treasury of everything good has been opened. The Kingdom of Heaven has been waiting for you from all eternity.”

Our shepherd, the source of the water of life, has died. The sun grew dark when he passed from here. But now man’s captor has been captured. This is the day when our Savior broke through the gates of death.

He has destroyed the barricades of the land of the dead, and overthrown the sovereignty of the devil. Now is the day when our Savior broke through the gates of death.

Prayer

Omnipotent, eternal God, since your only Son went down among the dead and came back to life again in glory, in your goodness please bring back to life your faithful people who were buried with him in the Bath to be one thing with him in the eternal life of heaven, where he is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.