



#### First Reading

Isaiah 42.1-9, 49.1-9

Here is my slave, whom I support, the one I chose, one who pleases me, the one on whom I put my spirit. He will give birth to honesty for the nations, not by shouting, not screaming, not making his voice heard in the streets. He will not break a bruised stalk, and will not quench a smouldering wick until he brings honesty about on the earth; all the shores are waiting for his teaching. This is what is said by God YHWH, the one who created the heavens and spread them out, who spread out the earth below with its crops, who gives breath to his people and spirit to those walking there: "I, YHWH, have called you for honesty to conquer; I have taken you by the hand; I formed you and set you down there as a Treaty among the people,

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a light for the nations:
to open the eyes of the blind,
   to bring prisoners out of confinement,
   and those who live in darkness out of their dungeons.
I am YHWH; this is my name;
   I give my glory to no one else,
   and do not lend praise of me to idols.
Now what existed earlier has already happened;
   but now I am foretelling something new;
before it comes out into existence
   I am announcing it to you."
Listen to me, all you shores,
   pay attention, peoples living far off.
YHWH called me from birth;
   he gave me my name from my mother's womb.
He made me into a sharp-edged sword
   and hid me in the shadow of his arm;
he made me a polished arrow
   and hid me in his quiver.
"You are my slave," he said to me,
   "Israel, the one through whom I reveal my glory."
Though I thought I had worked for no purpose,
   and spent my strength uselessly, for nothing,
it turns out that my reward comes with YHWH,
   and my pay from my God.
And now this is said by YHWH,
   who formed me from the womb to be his slave,
to bring Jacob back to him,
   so that Israel gathers to his side
(Because I will be glorious in YHWH's eyes
   and my God will be my strength);
Yes, he says,
   "It is too little for you to be my slave
   to elevate the tribes of Jacob,
   and to restore those of Israel I have preserved.
I will also make you a light for the Gentiles,
   so that you will bring my rescue to the ends of the earth."
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This is what is said by YHWH, the liberator of Israel, their Holy One, "Kings will see and come forward, and rulers will worship the one human beings despise, the one nations detest, the slave of kings; because of YHWH, who is loyal, Israel's Holy One, who has chosen you." This is what YHWH says: "I heard you at the opportune moment; I gave you help on the day of your liberation; I will keep you safe and give you to the people as a Treaty, to restore the earth, and parcel out the abandoned heritages, so that you can tell prisoners, 'Come out,' and those in darkness, 'Show yourselves.'"

Today in the Jordan as the Master was bathed, the sky opened up and the Spirit lighted on him in the form of a dove; the Father's voice was heard, "This is the Son I love, who pleases me greatly."

The Spirit came down in visible form as a dove, and a voice from heaven was heard, "This is the Son I love, who pleases me greatly."

## Second Reading A Sermon by St. Gregory Nazianzen

The Prince is bathed in light; we should also be bathed in light. The Prince is bathed in water; we should also go down with him, and come back out with him.

John is bathing people when Jesus approaches. Perhaps he comes to sanctify the one who is bathing him; but certainly, he comes to bury sinful humanity in the water. He comes to sanctify the Jordan for our sake and to prepare it for us; the one who is Spirit and matter comes to begin a new creation through Spirit and water.

The Bather protests; Jesus insists. Then John says, "I ought to be being bathed by you." He is the lamp in the presence of the sun, the voice in the presence of the Word, the friend in the presence of the Groom, the greatest of all who were born to woman in the presence of the firstborn of all creation, the one who leaped in his mother's womb in the presence of the one who was worshiped while in the womb, the forerunner and future forerunner in the presence of the one who has now come and is also to come again. "I ought to be being bathed by you," and we should add, "and for you," because John is going to be bathed in blood, washed clean like the Rock, but not merely by the washing of his feet.

Jesus rises out of the water, and the world rises with him. Heaven, like Paradise with its flaming sword, closed by Adam for himself and his descendants, is torn open. The Spirit comes to him as to an equal, and gives evidence of his divinity. A voice presents testimony to him from heaven, his place of origin. The Spirit comes down in bodily form like the dove that so long before announced the end of the flood, and so gives honor to the body that is one and the same thing as God.

Today, then, let us do honor to the Prince's bath and celebrate this feast in holiness. Make yourselves totally clean and stay clean. Nothing gives as much pleasure to God as the return and the rescue of human beings, for whom every word of his and every revelation exist. He wants you to become a living force for all mankind, to be lights shining in the world. You are to be gleaming lights as you stand beside the Prince, the great light, bathed in the radiance of the one who is the light of heaven. You are to enjoy more and more the pure and dazzling light of the Trinity, as now you have received—even if not fully—a ray of his splendor, emanating from the one God, in our Master Prince Jesus, to whom be glory and power through all the ages of ages. Amen.

Today the sky opened up, and the water of the sea became sweet and fragrant; the earth was overjoyed, the mountains and hills leaped with happiness, because the Prince was bathed by John in the Jordan.

What happened that the sea ran away, and the Jordan turned back on itself? Because the Prince was bathed by John in the Jordan.

#### Prayer

Father in heaven, since you revealed the Prince as your Son by the voice that spoke over the water of the Jordan, please let all of us who share in

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the Prince's sonship follow in his path of service to the human race, and reflect the glory of his Kingdom even to the ends of the earth, because he is Master through all the ages of ages. Amen.



## First Reading

Sirach 1.1-20

All wisdom comes from YHWH, and is with him for ever. Can anyone count the sand by the sea, the drops of rain, the days of eternity? Who is there to explore the height of heaven, the breadth of earth, the deep abyss, and wisdom? Wisdom was created before everything, and good judgment and understanding are eternal. Has anyone had wisdom's root revealed to him? Who knows its subtleties? There is one person whose wisdom is extraordinarily awesome: the one seated upon his throne. He is its master; he saw it, comprehended it, and poured it out on everything he has done. It is there with every living body, from his gift; he has showered it upon his friends. Fear of YHWH is honor and glory, and happiness and a crown of joy. Fear of YHWH warms a person's heart, and gives it happiness and joy and a long life. The end will be pleasant for a person who fears YHWH, and he will find favor on the day of his death. The beginning of wisdom is to have reverent fear of God; and this is formed in faithful souls within the womb. It has an eternal foundation in such men, and it will be passed on to their offspring. The totality of wisdom consists in reverent fear of YHWH; it fills human beings with its yield.

It fills up all their households with longed-for gifts, and crams their granaries with its harvests.

The winner's crown of wisdom is reverent fear of YHWH,

since it blossoms into peace and perfect health;

it rains down understanding and knowledge,

and raises those who dominate it to honor. The root of wisdom is reverent fear of YHWH,

and its branches are a long life

and its branches are a long life.

Has anyone had wisdom's root revealed to him? Who knows its subtleties? The Supreme God has poured it out upon everything he has done; and he has given it as a gift to everyone who loves him.

All wisdom comes from the Master, who created it through the Holy Spirit; and he has given it as a gift to everyone who loves him.

#### Second Reading

#### Letter to Corinth by St. Clement I

We will keep praying constantly to the Creator of the universe for those he has chosen scattered through the world. We pray that he will not allow any of them to lapse, and will preserve them all through the Son he loves, Prince Jesus, through whom he called us out of darkness into light, and out of ignorance into the knowledge of his name.

Please give us the gift, Master, to put our hope in your name, to which every creature owes its reality. Please open our hearts' eyes to know you alone, "the highest one in the highest heavens, the holy one whose residence is in holiness. You level the arrogance of the conceited, you frustrate the schemes of atheists, you elevate the little ones and bring down the high ones. You give people wealth and take it away, you kill them and preserve them and give them new life." You alone are the benefactor of "spirits and the God of everything material, and your gaze penetrates even into deep recesses," as you observe what human beings do. You are the helper of those in danger, the "savior of those in despair"; you created and still watch over everything that has breath. You make peoples on earth multiply, and from them all you choose those who are to love you through Prince Jesus, the Son you love. It is through him that you have taught us, sanctified us, and given us honor.

Master, we beg you, please help us. Please come to assist those in pain, have pity on the downtrodden, raise those who have fallen, show

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your face to those in need, heal the sick, convert the wanderers, feed the hungry, set captives free, support the weak, and encourage cowards. Please have all nations know that only you are God, that Prince Jesus is your Son, and that "we are your people and the sheep in your pasture."

Master, you created the world in accordance with the eternal decree that is now revealed in what you have done. You are faithful through all the ages, just in your pronouncements, and awesome in power and majesty. You formed your creation with wisdom, and set it up with good judgment; everything we see proclaims your goodness. You are kind and merciful, and never fail those who put their trust in you. Please forgive our faults and sins; do not hold all your slaves' acts of disobedience against them, and purify us by your truth, and "guide our steps" in such a way that "by walking in holiness and virtue and simplicity of heart we will do what is good and pleasing" in your sight and in the sight of those in authority over us.

Please, Master, "let the light of your face shine upon us, so that we will enjoy your blessings" in peace, protected by your strong hand, and freed from every sin by your outstretched arm; and please set us free from those who hate us without reason for doing so.

Please give peace and harmony to us and to all mankind, just as you gave it to our ancestors "when they reverently called upon you in faith and truth." Master, you are the only one who can bestow these gifts—and even greater benefits—upon us. We praise you through Prince Jesus, our high priest and the defender of our souls, through whom may you receive glory and majesty now and for every generation, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

What god is as great as our God? You are the God who performs miracles.

You have shown your power to the nations; and with your strong arm, you have liberated your people. You are the God who performs miracles.

#### Prayer

Father of love, please listen to our prayers; help us to know your will and to perform it with courage and faith. 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

Sirach 11: 12-28

Here is a man who is slow, needing help, weaker than others, and full of poverty, and YHWH's eyes look favorably on him, and he raises him above his miserable condition, and holds his head up, and everyone is astonished at him. Goodness and badness, life and death, poverty and riches, are in YHWH's hands. Wisdom, good judgment, practical knowledge, love, and virtuous conduct come from YHWH. Error and darkness were created in sinners from their birth, and evil grows old along with perpetrators of wrong. God's gift lasts with the reverent, and his favor brings eternal success. There are those who grow rich by scrimping and saving, and this is all the reward that they are offered. When they say, "Now I can rest; I will enjoy what I have," they do not know how long they have before they die and leave it all to someone else. But you commit yourself to what you agreed to do, and work hard at it, and grow old in your work. Do not be surprised at what sinners do; believe in YHWH, and keep at your work; because it is simple in YHWH's eyes to make a poor man rich in an instant. God's blessing is the reward for being reverent, and his good word will have its harvest at the proper time. Do not say, "What is there for me in this?"

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Or "how can I be better off for this?"

And do not say, "I am ruler of my life,

what harm can come to me from now on?"

In times of prosperity, we forget adversity,

and in bad times, we forget the good.

But it is a simple thing for YHWH on the day of death

to give a man what his deeds have earned.

The anguish of the moment makes one not remember pleasure, and it is at the end that his life becomes clear.

Do not call anyone successful before his death,

because it is by his end that a man is known.

When the wealthy man says, "Now I can rest and enjoy what I have," he does not know how long he has before he dies and leaves it to someone else.

The rich man said in his heart, "I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, and put everything I have in them," but he does not know how long he has before he dies and leaves it all to someone else.

#### Second reading

## Rules for Monks by St. Basil the Great

Love of God cannot be taught. We did not learn from anyone how to enjoy light or the desire to live, or that we love our parents or guardians; and it is the same—perhaps even more—with our love for God; it does not come by being taught by someone else. As soon as a living creature—man—comes into existence, the faculty of reason is planted in us like a seed that contains within it the ability and need to love. When the school of God's law takes in this faculty of reason, it cultivates it carefully, tends it with skill, and with God's help brings it to full flower.

And this is why I find you by God's gift with the zeal required to reach this goal, and on your side you help me with your prayers. I will try to fan into flame the spark of divine love that is hidden within you, as far as I can through the power of the Holy Spirit.

First, let me say that we have already received from God the ability to carry out his commands; and so we have no reason to resent them, as if we were being asked something beyond our capacity. We also have no reason to be angry, as if we had to pay back more than we have received. When we use this ability in the proper, suitable way, we lead a life of virtue and holiness; but if we misuse it, we fall into sin.

And this is the definition of sin: the misuse of power given us by God for doing good; a use contrary to God's commandments. But on the other side, the virtue that God asks of us is the use of the same powers based on a good conscience and in accordance with God's command.

Given this, we can say the same thing about love. Since we received a command to love God, then we have from the first moment of our existence an innate power and ability to love. The proof of this need not be looked for outside ourselves; each of us can learn it from himself and in himself. It is natural for us to want things that are good and look attractive—though at first, different things seem beautiful and good to different people. In the same way, we love what is related to us or near us, even though we have not been taught to do so, and we spontaneously feel benevolent toward our benefactors.

But I ask you, what is more wonderful than the beauty of God? What thought is more attractive or satisfying than God's majesty? What desire is stronger or overpowering than the desire planted by God in a soul that is completely purified of sin and which cries out in its love, "I am wounded by love"? The radiance of God's beauty is completely beyond the power of words to describe.

I love you, Master, my strength, my Master, my Rock, my fortress, my liberator.

God is my Rock; I find protection in him; my Master, my Rock, my fortress, my liberator.

#### Prayer

Father of love, please listen to our prayers, and help us to know your will and to carry it out with courage and faith. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.

# 🐠 ednesday

First Reading Wisdom sings its own praises, and boasts before its own people. It opens its mouth where the Supreme Ones meet, and boasts before these Powers, "I have come out of the mouth of the Supreme Being, and covered the earth in my cloud. My home is in the highest regions, and my throne is on a pillar of cloud. I alone exist throughout heaven's dome, and wander in the earth's deep abysses. I am in the waves in the ocean and in the whole of the earth, and I own every people and nation. I looked for a resting-place among all of them, and searched for the inheritance in which to live. Then the Creator of everything gave me an order, and the one who formed me set up my tent; he said, "You are to make your home in Jacob, and Israel is your inheritance." He created me before time began, and I will not leave for all eternity. I was his personal servant in his holy tent, and in this way I came to live in Zion. In the same way, he set me down in the city he loved, and gave me authority in Jerusalem. And I took root in an honorable people, in the share allotted to YHWH's inheritance. I grew tall as a cedar on Lebanon, like a cypress on Mount Hermon; I grew tall as a palm tree in Engedi, like a rose in Jericho, like a beautiful olive tree in the field, like a plane tree on a bank.

Sirach 24.1-22

I gave off the scent of cinnamon and balm, and was redolent of the perfume of myrrh, and of galbanum and onycha and exotic spice, and of frankincense in the holy tent. I spread out my branches like a terebinth, and my branches are smooth and graceful; I yielded pleasures like a vine, and my blossoms become rich fruits. Come to me, everyone attracted to me, and fill yourselves with my fruit; because recalling me is sweeter than honey, and my legacy is better than a honeycomb. One who eats me will still be hungry, and one who drinks will still have thirst; one who obeys me will never feel disgrace, and those who serve me will never fail." All this is what the Book of the Treaty of the Supreme Being is, the law Moses commanded us to obey, the inheritance of the community of Jacob.

I am the way, and I am truth and life; no one can come to the Father except through me.

In the beginning, before time began, he created me, and through eternity I will not leave. No one can come to the Father except through me.

# Second Reading Treatise Against Heresies by St. Irenaeus

No one can know the Father independently of God's Word, or in other words, unless the Son reveals him; and no one can know the Son unless the Father wills it.

Now the Son fulfills the Father's wishes; the Father is the one who sends, the Son is sent, and he comes. The Father is beyond our sight and comprehension, but he is known by his Word, who tells us of the one who is beyond all telling. But it is also true that only the Father knows his Word; and the Master has revealed both truths. And so the Son reveals the knowledge of the Father by his revealing himself; knowledge of the Father consists in the self-revelation of the Son, because everything is revealed through the Word.

The Father's purpose in revealing the Son was to make himself known to all of us, and so to welcome into eternal rest those who believe in him, making their virtue permanent, and preserving them from death. To believe in him means to do his will.

Now the Word reveals God the Creator through his own creation. Through the world, he reveals the Master who made the world, and through everything that is made, he reveals the craftsman who made it all. Through the Son, the Word reveals the Father who engendered him as Son.

Everyone speaks of all this in the same language, but they do not believe it in the same way. The Word revealed himself and his Father through the Law and the prophets, and though all the people heard the same message, they did not all believe it equally. The Father was revealed through the Word made visible and tangible, but not everyone believed in him equally—but everyone saw the Father in the Son, because, though the Father of the Son cannot be seen, the Son of the Father can be.

The Son performs everything as a service to the Father, from beginning to end, and no one can know God without the Son. The way to know the Father is the Son; knowledge of the Son is in the Father, and is revealed through the Son. This is why the Master said, "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son has revealed him." The word "revealed" here refers not only to the future, as if the Word only began to reveal the Father when he was born from Mary; but it refers equally to all time. From the beginning, the Son is present to creation, reveals the Father to everyone: to those the Father chooses, when the Father chooses, and as the Father chooses. And so, there is in everyone and through everyone one God the Father, one Word and Son, and one Spirit, and one rescue for everyone who believes in him.

No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the Father's bosom, has made him known.

No one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. The only Son, who is in the Father's bosom, has made him known.

#### Prayer

Father of love, please listen to our prayers, and help us to know your will and to do it with courage and faith. 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

Sirach 42.15-43.12

I will now recall what God has done, and tell about what I have seen. God's actions are in his words; they do his will as he has ordered them. The brilliant sun looks down on everything, and what it does is full of YHWH's glory. But YHWH has not given power to the holy beings of his to tell of all his marvelous actions, though YHWH the Omnipotent has set them there for everything to stand as evidence of his glory. He plumbs our depths and searches our hearts, and understands our devious ways; because YHWH knows everything that can be known, and he reads the signs in the world that speak of the past and the future; and he reveals their dark secrets. There is no thought that escapes him, and nothing said that he does not know. He has put into the universe the greatness of his wisdom, and exists from before eternity to all eternity; nothing can be added to him, nothing removed, and he needs no one to advise him. How attractive is everything he has done! A man's vision can see even a spark! Everything lives and remains forever,

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to fill every need, and they all do as they are told. Each is different from every other, and he has made nothing incomplete. One by one, they show themselves as good, and can anyone have enough of their beauty? The clear dome of the sky glows high above, and reveals the glory of heaven; the rising sun, his marvelous instrument, proclaims brilliantly what YHWH has done; at noon it dries up the land, and who can stand its burning heat? A man at a forge creates great heat, but it burns the mountains three times as much; it exhales a breath of fire and emits its dazzling rays that blind the eye. YHWH who made it is great, and it is he who spurs it onward. He also made the moon to measure the changes of time and to be the seasons' sign. The moon is what tells us of the feasts, as it gives its light that dims itself to nothing. The month is named after it, as it keeps time with the moon's changes; it is a tool of the armies there in the sky that shine in heaven's dome: the sky's beauty, the glory of the stars, adorning with their lights YHWH's high places. It is at his command they keep their positions and never weaken in their nightly watch. Look at the rainbow, and praise its maker; it is lovely in its radiance. It rings the heavens round in its glorious circle and it is the Supreme Hands that bent it in this way.

You have the right, our Master and God, to receive glory and honor and power, because you created everything, and by your will they came to be and were created. You created everything that exists, heaven and earth, and everything the heavens hold within their reach; you are the Master of everything, because you created everything, and by your will they came to be and were created.

#### Second Reading Discourse Against the Pagans by St. Athanasius

The absolutely holy Father, whose excellence is far greater than any creature's, by his own wisdom and Word, who is our Master and Savior the Prince, like a skilled pilot guides all creation to safety, regulating and keeping it in existence, as he sees fit. It is proper for creation to exist as he has made it and as we see it existing, because this is his will, which no one can deny. Of course, if the movement of the universe were irrational, and the world went along randomly, then there might be grounds for not believing what we say. But if the world is constructed with reason, wisdom, and knowledge, and is filled with orderly beauty, then it must owe its beginning and its order to no one else but the Word of God.

He is God, the living and creative God of the universe, the Word of the good God, who is God in his own right. The Word is different from everything created; he is the unique Word that belongs to the good Father; this is the Word that created this whole world and gives it light with his loving wisdom. The one who is the good Word of the good Father produced the order in all of creation by joining opposites together and forming from them one harmonious sound. He is God, unique and the sole offspring, who proceeds in his goodness from the Father as from the source of goodness, and who gives order, direction, and unity to creation.

By his eternal Word the Father created everything, and imparted to every creature its nature. But he did not want to see them driven back and forth at the mercy of their own natures, and in this way reduced to nothingness; no, in his goodness he governs and maintains the whole of nature by his Word (who is himself also God), so that under the guidance, providence, and regulating of the Word, the whole of nature can remain stable and coherent in his light.

Nature was to share in the Father's Word, whose reality is the truth, and to be helped in its existing by him, because without him it would cease to exist. The reason is that unless the Word, who is the very "visible counterpart of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation," kept the

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world in existence, it could not exist. Whatever exists, visible or invisible, remains in existence through him and in him, and he is also the head of the Church, as we are taught by those who serve the truth in their sacred writings.

The omnipotent and totally holy Word of the Father pervades the whole of reality, disclosing his power everywhere and shining on everything visible and invisible. He maintains it all, and ties it all together in himself. He leaves nothing bereft of his power, but gives it life and keeps it in existence through all of creation and within each individual creature.

In the beginning, before he made the earth, before he hollowed out the ocean bed, before he touched the water and made it flow, before the mountains were set into their places, YHWH created me.

When he put the sky in its place, I was there as a master craftsman working at his side; before the mountains were set into their places, YHWH created me.

#### Prayer

Father of love, please listen to our prayers; help us to know your will and to perform it with courage and faith. 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

Sirach 43.13-35

At his command, the snow plummets down, and it gives speed to the lightning of his judgment;
and this opens his treasuries, and clouds pour out like birds.
His majesty gives the clouds their strength, and breaks up the hailstones.
At the sight of him, mountains shake

and the south wind blows at his will;

The sound of his thunder makes the earth reverberate, and drives the storm and the hurricane. He sends down snow like fluttering birds, and it settles like a swarm of locusts; eyes are dazzled at its whiteness, and the mind is overwhelmed by the blizzard. Frost is poured on the earth as if it were salt, and shines on the blossoms of the thornbush. The north wind blows and makes crystal of the water; every pond and lake stands frozen, with its water wearing armor. He eats up the mountains and burns the empty places, and consumes the grass in his fire; but relief comes quickly in the mist and restoration with the dew. His regulations calm the ocean and plant islands upon it. Those who sail the sea relate its dangers, and when this reaches our ears, we are astonished. Because in it are strange and wondrous things, all kinds of living things, like the species of whales. It is by him that each of them succeeds, and everything exists just as he commands. We could say much more, and still fall short; in sum, he is Everything. How could we be fit to reveal his greatness? He is greater than everything he has made. YHWH is awesome, and surpassingly great, and his power is astounding. Raise your voice as much as you can in praise; he is still beyond it; but glorify him to the limit of your strength, and do not tire, though you will still fall short. Has anyone seen him to describe him? Can anyone praise him as he deserves?

There are greater things even than these,

because we have seen only a bit of what he does,

because YHWH made everything,

and gives wisdom to those who respect him.

Glorify God with all your skill, and still what you say will fall short; in sum, he is Everything.

How shall we be able to give him the praise he deserves? He is much greater than everything he has done; in sum he is Everything.

#### Second Reading

#### A Discourse against the Pagans by St. Athanasius

"In the beginning, there was the Word, and the Word was face to face with God, and the Word was God. Everything came into being through him, and without him there came to be not even one thing that came into being." In these words the theologian John teaches that nothing exists or remains in existence except in and through the Word.

Think of a musician tuning his lyre. By his skill, he adjusts the high notes to the low ones, and the intermediate ones to all the rest, and produces a harmonious series. The wisdom of God too holds the world like a lyre and adjusts things in the air to those on the earth, and things in heaven to those in the air, and brings each part into tune with the whole. By his edict and will he regulates all of them to produce the beauty and harmony of a single, orderly universe. While remaining unchanged with his Father, he moves the whole of creation by his unchanging nature, in accordance with the Father's will. He gives everything existence and life as its nature dictates, and so creates a marvelous and truly divine harmony.

To illustrate this profound mystery, let us take the example of a choir with many singers. A choir is composed of a variety of men, women and children, of both old and young. Under the direction of the conductor, each sings in the way that is natural for him: men with men's voices, boys with boys' voices, and adolescents with adolescent voices; yet all of them produce a single harmony. Or consider the example of our soul. It moves our senses consistently with their different functions so that in the presence of a single object, they all act simultaneously: the eyes see, the ears hear, the hand touches, the nose smells, the tongue tastes, and often the other parts of the body also act; for example, the feet may be walking.

Though this is only a poor analogy, it gives some idea of how the whole universe is governed. The Word of God has only to give a gesture of command, and everything falls into place; each creature performs its own proper function, and all of them together constitute one single harmonious order.

Praise the God of heaven; show gratitude to him in front of others, because he has done you a great deal of good.

Praise God and sing to him, and proclaim the marvels he has done, because he has done you a great deal of good.

#### Prayer

Father of love, please listen to our prayers; help us to know your will and to perform it with courage and faith. 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

Sirach 44.1-2, 16-45.5

Let us now praise famous men, our ancestors who gave us existence. YHWH has created great glory in their greatness from ages gone by. Enoch pleased YHWH and was taken up as an example for every generation. Noah was found completely virtuous, and renewed the race in the time of rage; He was left behind on the earth, because of it, when the flood came. An eternal treaty was made with him, not to flood out everything material again. Abraham was the great father of many nations,

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with no one like him in reputation. He kept the law of the Supreme Being, who entered into a treaty with him; a treaty ratified in his own flesh, and he withstood the test and remained faithful. And that is why God promised him with an oath that he would give blessings to nations from his descendants and make them as numerous as the grains of the earth's dust and elevate his descendants like the stars in the sky, and would give them an inheritance from sea to sea and from the River to the end of the earth. He extended this also to Isaac because of his father Abraham: he gave him the right of the firstborn and extended the Treaty to him. Then the blessing rested on Jacob's head; he acknowledged him as firstborn and gave him the inheritance. He set the boundaries for his tribes and fixed their number at twelve. And he brought out of him the Man of Mercy, who found honor in the sight of everything living: God's favorite and man's, Moses, whom everyone remembers with praise. He made him like the Sacred Ones in glory, and enhanced his fear and respect among the Gentiles. God performed miracles at his words, and gave him a great reputation even before kings; he gave him his commandments for his people and showed him his glory. He picked him out for his faithfulness and meekness and set him apart from every other man. He allowed him to hear his voice and brought him into the dark cloud, where, face to face, he gave him the commandments, the law of life and understanding, for him to teach his Treaty to Jacob,

#### and his orders to Israel.

Listen, Israel, and keep carefully what the Master commanded you, and you will know that your God the Master is a faithful God, true to his promises and merciful to everyone who loves him.

You are to love your God the Master with all your heart and with all your soul and all your strength, and you will know that your God the Master is a faithful God, true to his promises and merciful to everyone who loves him.

#### Second Reading A letter to Corinth by St. Clement I

Our objective must be the blessing of God, and our study the way to win it. Go over the records of ancient times; why was Abraham blessed? Was it not because his honest and faithful conduct was inspired by faith? And Isaac's faith was so strong that he allowed himself freely to be offered as a sacrifice, since he knew the result. Jacob had the humility to leave his native country because of his brother, and go to be a slave of Laban; and he was given the twelve tribes of Israel.

Sincere pondering on each of these examples will make us realize the greatness of God's gifts. All the priests and Levites who served at the altar of God were descended from Jacob; the humanity of the Master Prince Jesus came from him. And through the tribe of Judah, kings, sovereigns, and heads of state descended from him. His other tribes also have their honor, because God promised Abraham, "your descendants will be like the stars in the sky."

And so it is obvious that none of these people owed their honor or their elevation to themselves or to their own work or their virtuous acts. And the same is true of us, since we are called in Prince Jesus by his will. We do not become virtuous by our own wisdom, intelligence, devoutness, or any action of our own, no matter how holy it is, but by faith, the one means by which God has made people virtuous from the beginning; may glory be given him through all the ages of ages. Amen.

So then, what are we to do, my brothers and sisters? Give up doing good deeds? Stop practicing Christian love? Of course not. We should be ready and eager for every chance to do good, and put our whole heart into it. Even the Creator and Master of the universe derives satisfaction from what he does. He set the spheres of the heavens in their places by

## SACURDAY

his supreme power, and by his infinite wisdom he arranged them. He separated the land from the water surrounding it and made his own will its firm foundation. And by his command, he brought to life the animals that roam over the earth. He created the ocean and all its living creatures, and then by his power he set its boundaries. Finally, with his own holy and undefiled hands, he formed man, the highest and most intelligent of his creatures, the copy of his own face. "Let us make man," said God, "in our image and likeness. And God made man; he made them male and female." Then, when he had finished making all his creatures, God gave them his approval and blessing: "Increase and multiply," he commanded them.

And so we must recognize that every honest man has been blessed with the gift of good deeds, and even the Master himself took delight in the prestige his deeds gave him. This should inspire us with a firm determination to do his will and make us put our whole strength into the work of living a Christian life.

Our God the Master is strong and faithful, true to his promises and merciful to those who love him, and to everyone who keeps his commandments.

For those who love God, everything works together for good, and to everyone who keeps his commandments.

#### Prayer

Father of love, please listen to our prayers, and help us to know your will and perform it with courage and faith. 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

#### Deuteronomy 1.1, 6-18

This is the speech Moses gave to the whole of Israel beyond the Jordan in the desert, on the plain opposite Suph, between Paran, Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab:

Our God YHWH spoke to us in Horeb, and said, "You have lived long enough at this mountain. Leave here and travel into the hill country of the Amorites and to all the surrounding regions on the plain, the mountains, the valleys, to the south, and the shore: to the land inhabited by the Canaanites, and to Lebanon, as far as the great river Euphrates. I have handed that land over to you, and so go into and take over ownership of the land which YHWH swore he would give to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and to their descendants after them."

At that time I told you, "I am not able to support you alone. Your God YHWH has made you very numerous, and here you stand today, as many as there are stars in the sky. And may YHWH, the God of your ancestors, make you a thousand times more numerous than now, and give you the blessings he has promised you. But how can I deal with all your problems, burdens, and complaints by myself? And so choose wise, intelligent, and learned men from among your tribes, and I will give them authority over you."

And you answered me, "What you told us to do is good," and so I took the heads of your tribes, who were wise and learned men, and gave

## Sunday

them authority over you as leaders of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, as well as other officials for your tribes.

What I commanded your judges at that time was this: "Hear the cases between your relatives, and pass honest judgment between a man and his relative or the foreigner who is living with him. You are to show no partiality in your judgment; you are to hear the little people as well as the great ones, and are not to be intimidated by any man who stands before you, because the judgment you give is God's. Bring any cases that are too hard for you to me, and I will hear them." I then gave you all the regulations you were to follow.

Your God the Master is the God over all gods, the great God, who is mighty and awesome. He has no favorites and accepts no bribes.

You are to listen to the little people as well as the great ones and not be intimidated by any man, because the judgment is God's. He has no favorites and accepts no bribes.

#### Second Reading A Letter to Ephesus by St. Ignatius of Antioch It is right for you to give glory in every way to Prince Jesus, who has

given glory to you. You are to become holy in everything by being united in perfect obedience in your submission to the bishop and priests.

I am not giving you orders as if I were someone important; and even if I am a prisoner because of the name of the Prince, I have not become perfect in Prince Jesus. I am only beginning to be a student now, and so I am speaking to you as fellow students. You are the ones, in fact, who should be giving me strength because of your faith, your encouragement, your patience, and your serenity.

But since love will not allow me not to say anything about you, I am taking the opportunity to inspire you to be united in conformity with the mind of God; because our life, who is Prince Jesus—without whom we *have* no life—is the mind of the Father, just as the bishops, appointed all over the whole earth, are in conformity with the mind of Prince Jesus.

And so it is appropriate for you to be in agreement with the mind of the bishop—as you are, in fact. Your excellent priests, who are a credit to God, are in as much accord with the bishop as strings are with a harp; and so in your harmony of mind and heart, the song you sing is Prince Jesus. All of you together form a choir, in such a way that, in your

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harmony of sound through your harmony of hearts, taking in unity the note from God, you can sing in unison to the Father through Prince Jesus.

If you do this, he will listen to you and see from your good deeds that you are cells in his Son's body; and so it is to your advantage to live in perfect unity, so that you can have your share in God at every moment.

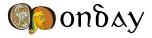
And if I have become, in this short time, so close a friend of your bishop—with a friendship based on the spirit, not a material one—I consider that you must have received a much greater blessing, because you are united with him in the same way as the Church is united to Prince Jesus, and Prince Jesus to the Father, so that everything is in harmony through the Father. No one is to make any mistake about this: unless a person is inside the Holy Place, he is deprived of God's bread; you see, if the prayer of one or two has this power, the power of the prayer of the bishop and the whole Church is far greater.

I beg you in the Master, please lead a life that is suited to the vocation you have been called to. Be careful to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There is one body and one Spirit, and there is only one hope given to you by your calling. Be careful to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

#### Prayer

Father of heaven and earth, please listen to our prayers and show us the way to peace in the world. 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

Moses said this to the people:

Deuteronomy 4.1-8,32-40

"Now, Israel, listen to the rules and regulations I am teaching you to observe, so that you will live and go in and take over the land which

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YHWH, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. You are not to add to the words of the commands I give you, or remove anything from them, so that you will be able to keep the commandments of your God YHWH, which are the commandments I am giving you.

"You saw what YHWH did at Baal Peor, when he rooted out and killed those among you who followed the Baal of Peor; and those of you who adhered to your God YHWH are alive today, every one of you.

"And the fact is that the regulations and commandments I am teaching you are the commands my God YHWH gave me for you to use to direct your conduct in the land you are to enter and possess. And so be careful to observe them, because this is your wisdom and intelligence in the sight of the peoples who will hear these regulations and say, "This great nation is a really wise and intelligent people."

"And what great nation is there that has a god as near to it as our God YHWH is to us, so that we can call on him for any reason at all? And what great nation is there that has rules and just regulations that are comparable to everything in this law which I am proposing to you today?

"Ask this of past ages, the time before yours since the day God created man on the earth, and ask it from one end of the sky to the other: whether anything this great has ever happened, or anything like it has ever been heard of. Did any people ever hear the voice of God speaking from within a fire, as you heard, and live? Did any god ever try to go and take a nation to himself from within another nation by proofs, signs, and miracles, by war, by a mighty fist on his outstretched arm that struck enormous terror, as your god YHWH did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?

"It was shown to you so that you would know that it is YHWH who is God; there is no other one but he. He let you hear his voice coming out of the sky so that he could teach you, and he showed his great fire on earth, and you heard words from him come from within the fire. And it was because he loved your ancestors that he chose their descendants after them; and he brought you out of Egypt personally, with his mighty power, and drove out of your way nations greater and more powerful than you, to bring you in and give you their land as your inheritance, as it exists today.

"And so realize today, and keep it locked in your heart, that it is YHWH who is God in the sky above and the earth beneath you; and

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there is no other one. And so you are to keep his regulations and his commandments which I am giving you today, so that you will prosper, and that you and your children who follow you will have a long life in the land which your God YHWH is giving you for all time."

Pay attention, Israel, to the Master's commandments, and write them in your hearts as if they were books. I will give you a land flowing with milk and honey.

Listen, my people, to my warning—Israel, if only you would listen to me! I will give you a land flowing with milk and honey.

#### Second Reading Letter to Ephesus by St. Ignatius of Antioch

Try to gather more often to show your gratitude to God and give him your praises, because when you come together often, Satan's powers are undermined, and the destruction he threatens is averted because of the unanimity of your faith. Nothing is better than peace, where every form of warfare between heaven and earth is brought to an end.

None of this will escape you if you have complete faith in and love for Prince Jesus; these are the beginning and the end of life: faith is the beginning, and love the end. When these two exist together, God is there, and everything else that deals with living properly follows from them. No one who professes his faith keeps sinning; no one who has love hates anyone. "A tree is known by its fruit." And so those who profess to belong to the Prince will be known by what they do; because the deeds we perform are not a matter of words here and now, but depend on the power of faith and in remaining true to the end.

It is better to remain silent and exist than to talk and not exist. Teaching is good—if the speaker acts also. There was one teacher who "spoke and it came into existence," and even what he did in silence is appropriate to the Father's reality. The one who has within him what Jesus said can also really listen to his silence, so that he will be complete and can act through his speech and be recognized by his silence.

Nothing is hidden from the Master, and even our secrets are there in his presence; and so we should do everything in the knowledge that he has made his home inside us so that we become his temples, and he the God within us. He is—and will show himself—in our sight, to the degree that we have love for him in holiness.

## Cuesday

"Make no mistake," my brothers and sisters; those who destroy families "will not inherit the Kingdom of God." If those who do these things in a material sense have died, it will be much worse if a person corrupts with his evil teaching the faith in God for which Prince Jesus was crucified. People of that sort will go out into unquenchable fire, because they are defiled, and so will anyone who listens to them.

You see, the Master received the anointing on his head so that he could breathe incorruptibility into the Church. Do not let yourselves be anointed with the evil odor of the teaching of this world's sovereign, or he will lead you in chains away from the life that is set there before you. Why is it that we are not all wise, when we have received the knowledge of God, which is Prince Jesus? Why do we die in our stupidity, without knowing the gift that God has given us?

My spirit is given up to the menial service of the cross, which is shocking to unbelievers, but is salvation and eternal life to us.

Everything you say or do should be done in the name of our Master Prince Jesus; show your gratitude to God the Father through him.

Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God, in the name of our Master Prince Jesus.

#### Prayer

Father of heaven and earth, please listen to our prayers and show us the way to peace in the world. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



#### First Reading

This is what Moses said to the people:

Deuteronomy 6.4-25

"Hear this, Israel: YHWH, our God YHWH, is the only god. You are to love your God YHWH with your whole heart, your whole soul, and all your strength. Take to heart all the commandments I have told

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you today; repeat them constantly to your children, speak of them at home and away from home, when you lie down to rest, and when you rise. You are to tie them to your wrists as a reminder, and keep them as a pendant on your foreheads; you are to have them on the doorposts of your houses and on the posts of your gates.

"And this is how you are to act when your God YHWH brings you into the land where he swore to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that he would give you large, beautiful cities you did not build, houses full of good things of all sorts that you did not put in them, wells already dug which you did not have the digging of, and vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant. And so when you have eaten enough to make you full, be careful not to forget YHWH, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from that place where you were slaves.

"You are to respect your God YHWH and be his slaves, and take oaths in his name. You are not to follow other gods, the gods of the peoples all around you—because your God YHWH, who lives among you, is a jealous God—or you will rouse the anger of your God against you and he will destroy you off the face of the earth.

"You are not to try to challenge your God YHWH in the way you did in Massah. You are to keep faithfully the commandments of your God YHWH, his rules and regulations which he has imposed upon you. You are to do what is right and good in YHWH's eyes, so that you will prosper, and go in and take over the good land which your God YHWH swore to your ancestors he would clear off from all the enemies in your way, as YHWH has spoken.

"And when your son asks you in the days to come, "What is the meaning of these rules and regulations and orders that our God YHWH has imposed on you?" you are to answer your son, "We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and YHWH showed signs and miracles before our very eyes, which were tremendous and terrifying, against Egypt, Pharaoh, and all his household. And then he brought us out of there, to lead us into the land he was giving us as he swore to our ancestors. And YHWH commanded us to observe all these regulations and to hold our God YHWH in respect, for our everlasting good, so that he would preserve our lives, as we now exist today. Then this will be our virtue: for us to be careful to observe all these commandments in the presence of our God YHWH, as he imposed them on us."

## Cuesday

The Master's law is complete, giving life to the soul; the Master's words are trustworthy, giving wisdom to simple people; the Master's command is clear, giving light to the eye.

The man 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

## A Letter to Corinth by St. Clement I

A man who is really possessed by love for the Prince should keep his commandments. Can anyone express the binding power of God's love? Can anyone find words for the radiance of its beauty? The heights to which it lifts us are beyond all description.

Love unites us to God; "it cancels innumerable sins," has no limits to what it can put up with, and bears everything patiently. Love is neither sycophantic nor arrogant; it does not provoke divisions or create cliques, but always acts in harmony with others. All God's chosen people are made holy by it, because without it, it is impossible to please him. The Master took us to himself out of love, and because he loved us and it was God's will, our Master Prince Jesus gave his lifeblood for us: he gave us his body to ransom our body, his soul for our soul.

As so, my friends, see what a great, wonderful thing love is, and how it is impossible to express its perfection. Can anyone deserve it unless God makes him so? And that is why we must turn to him and beg his mercy for him to find for us a love free from human bias and one without stain.

Every generation from Adam's time to ours is now gone; but those who were made complete by God's grace now have a home among the sacred people, and when the Prince's kingdom finally appears, they will come into the open. "Take shelter in your rooms for a little while," says Scripture, "until my anger abates. Then I will remember the good days, and I will bring you back out of your graves."

It is a great privilege, my friends, if love enables us to live in harmony and in observance of God's commandments, because then this will gain us forgiveness for our sins. Scripture calls "privileged those whose disobedience is pardoned and whose sins are forgiven. It is a blessing for a man not to have the Master find fault with him, and have no deceit upon his lips." This is the blessing given those God has chosen through our Master Prince Jesus; and may glory be given him through all the ages of ages. Amen.

We have put our faith in the love God has for us. Those who have their home in love have their home in God, and God has his home in them.

We should love each other, because love comes from God. Those who have their home in love have their home in God, and God has his home in them.

#### Prayer

Father of heaven and earth, please listen to our prayers and show us the way to peace in the world. 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

Deuteronomy 7.6-14, 8.1-6

Moses said this to the people:

"You are a people sacred to your God YHWH; your God YHWH has chosen you to be a people for himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. YHWH did not bestow his love on you or choose you because you were more numerous than other people, since you were the smallest group of any people—but because YHWH loves you, and because he wanted to keep the oath he swore to your ancestors, YHWH brought you out with a mighty hand, and set you free you from your slavery to the hand of Pharaoh, the King of Egypt.

"And so be aware that your God YHWH is the one who is God; he is the faithful God who keeps his treaty and shows his mercy for a thousand generations to those who love him and keep his commandments; but he pays back those who hate him directly, and destroys them. And so you are to keep the commandment, the rules, and the regulations I impose on you today, and observe them.

"And what will happen from this is that, because you listen to these orders and keep and perform them, your God YHWH will keep the Treaty and show you the mercy which he swore to your ancestors. And

## Wednesday

he will love you and bless you and multiply you; and he will also bless your offspring and the produce of your land, your grain, your new wine, and your oil, the offspring of your cattle and your flocks, in the land which he swore to your ancestors that he would give you. You will be blessed more than any other people; there will not be a sterile male or female among your livestock.

"But you must be careful to observe every commandment I impose upon you today, so that you will live and multiply, and go in and take possession of the land about which YHWH swore to your ancestors. And you are to remember that your God YHWH led you all the way these forty years in the desert, to humble you and challenge you, to know what was in your hearts, whether you would keep his commandments or not. And that was why he humbled you, why he let you go hungry, and then fed you with manna—something you did not know of and which your ancestors did not know, to make you realize that man does not live only by bread, but by every word that comes from YHWH's mouth. Your clothing did not wear out on you or your feet swell during these forty years; so you should recognize in your hearts that your God YHWH punishes you in the same way a man punishes his son.

"In any case, you are to keep the commandments of your God YHWH, and walk along his paths and hold him in respect."

God first loved us and sent his own Son to be the sacrifice that frees us from our sins. We have come to know and believe in the love God has for us.

The Master has himself become our savior; he has redeemed us in his love. We have come to know and believe in the love God has for us.

#### Second Reading Dogmatic Constitution on the Church by Vatican II

In his wisdom and goodness the eternal Father created the whole world in accordance with his supremely free and mysterious purpose, and decreed that men were to be raised up to share in the life of God. When they fell in Adam, he did not abandon them, but always kept providing them with aids to salvation, in consideration of the Prince "who is the visible counterpart of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation." Before the ages, the Father "already knew" all those who were chosen, "and foreordained them to be made into the likeness of his Son, so that he would be the firstborn among many brothers."

God resolved to gather into the holy Church everyone who believes in the Prince. The Church, foreshadowed even from the beginning of the world, so marvelously prepared in the history of the people of Israel, established in these last times and revealed by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, will be made perfect in glory at the end of time. Then, as we read in the Fathers of the Church, all the virtuous from Adam on-from virtuous Abel, to the last of those chosen-with be gathered into the universal Church in the presence of the Father.

Finally, those who have not yet received the Good News are in their different ways related to God's people.

In the first place, there is that people who were given the Treaties and the promises, and from whom the Prince was born in his human descent: the people who are by God's choice most cherished because of the patriarchs. God never goes back on his gifts or his call.

God's plan of salvation also embraces those who acknowledge the Creator. Among these are especially the Muslims; they profess as their faith the faith of Abraham, and with us they worship one, merciful God, who will judge human beings on the last day.

And God is not far from those others who look for the unknown God in darkness and shadows, because he is the one who gives to every man life, inspiration, and everything else, and as Savior wishes every human being to be saved.

Eternal salvation is open to those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Prince or his Church, but look for God with a sincere heart, and under the inspiration of grace try in their lives to do his will, made known to them by the dictates of their conscience. Nor does Divine Providence deny the aids necessary for salvation to those who, with no blame on their part, have not yet reached an explicit belief in God, but who strive to lead a good life, under the influence of God's grace.

Whatever goodness and truth is found among them is seen by the Church as a preparation for the Good News, and as given by the one who shines on every human being, so that all of them will finally have life.

It was God's plan that in the fullness of time all creation would be

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# Chursday

brought together in unity under the Prince.

It pleased God that total perfection would reside in the Prince, and it was through him that God chose to bring everything into conformity with himself, so that all creation would be brought together in unity under the Prince.

#### Prayer

Father of heaven and earth, please listen to our prayers, and show us the way to peace in the world. 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

Deuteronomy 9.7-21, 25-29

This was what Moses said to the people:

"Keep in mind and do not forget how you provoked your God YHWH in the desert. From the day you left the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious toward YHWH.

"For instance, in Horeb you provoked YHWH's rage, and he was angry enough with you to destroy you. When I went up onto the mountain to receive the stone tablets of the Treaty YHWH made with you, I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights, and I ate nothing nor did I drink any water. Then YHWH handed over to me two stone tablets written by God's finger, and on them were all the words YHWH had spoken to you on the mountain out of the fire on the day you gathered. In any case, at the end of the forty days and forty nights, YHWH gave me the two stone tablets, the tablets with the Treaty.

"But then YHWH told me, 'Stand up! Go down from here immediately! Your people, the ones you brought out of Egypt, have turned corrupt! They have wandered off the road I ordered for them, and have made a molten idol!'

"And YHWH added, 'I have looked at this people, and they are pigheaded. Let me alone to destroy them and erase their names from under heaven; and I will make a mightier and greater nation from you than they are.'

"I then turned back and came down the mountain, which was burning in a fire, and the two stone tablets were in my two hands. And I looked out and there you were; you had sinned against your God YHWH, and had made a molten calf for yourselves! You had turned off the path YHWH ordered for you that quickly! And I took the two tablets and threw them down out of my two hands and broke them there before your eyes.

"And then I prostrated myself before YHWH as I had at the beginning, for forty days and forty nights; I ate no bread and drank no water, because of all the sins you committed when you acted vilely in YHWH's sight, and provoked him to anger. You see, I was afraid of the rage and hot indignation that YHWH had in his anger against you, to the extent that he wanted to destroy you. YHWH was also enraged against Aaron, and would have killed him; and so I prayed for Aaron at the same time. Then I took your sin, the calf you made, and melted it down in a fire and ground it up until it was as fine as dust; and I threw its dust into the brook that came down the mountain.

"In any case, I prostrated myself before YHWH in this way—for forty days and forty nights I prostrated myself because YHWH had said that he would destroy you. And I prayed YHWH about this, and said, 'Dear God YHWH, do not destroy the people you have set free by your greatness, the ones you brought out of Egypt with such a mighty hand. Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; do not look at the stubbornness of this people, or on their vice or their sin, or the land you brought us to will say, "Because YHWH could not bring them into the land he promised them, he brought them out only to kill them in the desert." But they are your people and your heritage, the ones you brought out by your mighty power and your outstretched arm.'"

Moses pleaded with God the Master, and said, "Why, Master, should your anger take fire against your people? Turn from your burning rage; remember Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to whom you promised a land flowing with milk and honey." So the Master relented and held back the punishment he had threatened for his people.

God said to Moses, "You have found favor with me; you are my

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intimate friend." So the Master relented and held back the punishment he had threatened for his people.

### Second Reading

### A letter by Fulgentius of Ruspe

Notice how at the end of our prayer we never say, "through the Holy Spirit," but only "through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son." By the mystery of the Incarnation, Prince Jesus "became man, the mediator between God and man. He is a priest forever in the line of Melchisedek; and by shedding his own blood he entered once and for all into the Holy Place; he did not enter a place made by human hands, a mere copy of the true one," he entered heaven itself, where he is enthroned beside God and pleading for us. The Church is perfectly correct in continuing to reflect this mystery in her prayer.

This mystery of Prince Jesus as the high priest is reflected in the statement of the Emissary Paul: "Then let us always offer the sacrifice of praise to God through him, since this is the fruit of lips that profess belief in his name." We once were enemies of the Father, but have been brought into conformity with him through the death of the Prince; and so through him we offer our sacrifice of praise, and our prayer to God.

He became our offering to the Father, and it is through him that our offering now is acceptable. And this is the reason that the Emissary the Rock urges us "to be built like living stones into a spiritual house, and be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices pleasing to God through Prince Jesus." And so this is the reason why we offer prayer to God our Father, but through our Master Prince Jesus.

When we speak of the priesthood of the Prince, what else do we mean but the incarnation? Through this mystery, the Son of God, "even though his state was divine, emptied himself and took on the condition of a slave; and as a slave he lowered himself so far as to accept death." Even though he possessed equality with the Father, "he became a little less than the angels." Though he was always equal to the Father, the Son "became" a little less because he became a man. The Prince lowered himself "when he emptied himself to take on the condition of a slave."

By this condition, the Prince, the only Son God ever fathered, and who as such always remained God, became a priest. We offer our sacrifice *to* him along with the Father; but *through* him the sacrifice we now offer is holy, living, and pleasing to God. In fact, if the Prince had not

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sacrificed himself for us, we could not offer any sacrifice, because it is in him that our human nature becomes a redemptive offering. When we offer our prayers through him, our priest, we acknowledge that the Prince really does possess the flesh of our race. This is obviously what the Emissary refers to when he says, "Every high priest is taken from among men. He is appointed to act on behalf of these same men in their relationship to God; he is to offer gifts and sacrifices to God."

But we do not merely say, "your Son" when we end our prayer. We also say, "who is alive and reigning with you as one with the Holy Spirit," and in this way we bring to mind the unity of nature of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Obviously, then, the Prince who exercises a priestly role on our behalf is the same Prince who enjoys a natural unity and equality with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

Let us approach the throne of grace with perfect confidence; we will find tenderness and grace to help us in time of need.

We do not have a high priest who is incapable of understanding our weakness; we will find tenderness and grace to help us in time of need.

#### Prayer

Father of heaven and earth, please listen to our prayers and show us the way to peace in the world. 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 for all the endless ages. Amen.



### First Reading

Moses said this to the people:

# Deuteronomy 10.12-11.9, 26-28

"Now, Israel, what is it your God YHWH demands of you but to hold your God YHWH in reverence, and walk along his paths and love him, to serve your God YHWH with all your heart and your whole soul, and to keep YHWH's commandments and regulations I impose upon you today for your good? In fact, the sky and the spheres above the sky belong to your God YHWH and so does the earth and everything in it.

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"But YHWH took satisfaction only in your ancestors, and loved them; and he chose their descendants after them, and you above everyone, as he does on this day.

"And so circumcise the foreskin of your hearts and do not be pigheaded any longer, because your God YHWH is God over all gods and Master over all masters; he is *the* great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality and takes no bribe. He produces justice for orphans and widows, and loves foreigners and gives them food and clothing. And so you are to love foreigners, because you were foreigners in the land of Egypt.

"You are to hold your God YHWH in reverence, you are to serve him and be loyal to him and take oaths in his name. He is the one you are to praise, and he is your God, the one who did for you these tremendous, awesome things you have seen with your own eyes. Your ancestors went down to Egypt with seventy persons, and now your God YHWH has made you as numerous as the starts in the sky.

"And so you are to love your God YHWH, and keep at all times what he demands of you, his rules and regulations, and his commandments. Notice that I am not now speaking to your children, who have not known and seen the retribution of your God YHWH, his greatness and his mighty fist on his outstretched arm: the miracles and deeds he performed among the Egyptians, to Pharaoh the King of Egypt, and to his whole land; what he did to the army of Egypt, their horses and their chariots, how he made the water of the Red Sea overwhelm them as they chased you, and how YHWH has destroyed them to this day; what he did for you in the desert until you came to this place, what he did to Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab the son of Reuben, how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, their households, their tents, and all the reality that they possessed right out of the midst of Israel. Your eyes have seen every tremendous deed performed by your God YHWH.

"And so you are to keep every commandment I impose upon you today, so that you will be strong and will go in to take possession of the land which you are crossing over to possess, and that you will have long years in the land YHWH swore to give your ancestors and to their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey.

"And now I am proposing to you a blessing and a curse: the blessing,

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if you obey the commandments of your God YHWH which I am imposing on you today, and the curse, if you do not obey your God YHWH's commandments and turn aside from the path I am imposing on you today, and go after other gods which you have not known."

We should love God because he has loved us first. To love God means to keep his commandments, and his commandments are not burdensome.

The love of God reaches perfection in those who are obedient to what he says, and his commandments are not burdensome.

### Second Reading

### A Treatise on Spiritual Perfection by Diadochus of Photice

No one who loves himself is capable of loving God. A person who loves God is one who kills his self-love for the immeasurable blessings of divine love; a man like this never looks to his own reputation, and is only concerned with the glory of God. If a person loves himself, he is concerned with his own reputation; but a person who loves God loves the glory of his Creator. Anyone who is alive to the love of God can be recognized from the way he constantly exerts himself to glorify him by fulfilling all his commandments and by taking satisfaction in his own humiliation.

Because of God's great majesty, it is appropriate for him to receive glory; but if a human being hopes to win God's favor, it is fitting for him to be humble. If we possess this love for God, we will be happy for his glory as John the Bather was, and we will never stop repeating, "He must grow greater, and I must grow less."

I know a man who, even though he regrets the fact that he does not love God as much as he desires, still loves him so much that his soul is on fire with a constant longing for God to be glorified and for his own complete disappearance. This man has no feeling of self-importance even when he receives praise. His desire to belittle himself is so great that he never even thinks of his own dignity; he fulfills his priestly duty by celebrating the Liturgy, but his intense love of God is a chasm that swallows all consciousness of his high office.

His humility makes him ignore any honor it might bring him, so that in his own eyes, he is nothing but a useless slave. Because of his desire for

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self-humiliation, he thinks of himself as beneath his office. His example is one that we should follow ourselves by shunning all honor and reputation for the innumerable blessings of God's love, because he has loved us so much.

Anyone who loves God in the depths of his heart has already been loved by God. In fact, the standard of a man's love for God depends on how deeply aware he is of God's love for him. When this awareness is keen, it makes whoever has it long to be shined on by the divine light, and this longing is so intense that it seems to penetrate his very bones. He loses all consciousness of himself and is entirely transformed by the love of God.

A man like this lives in this life and at the same time does not live in it, because, even though he inhabits his body, he is constantly leaving it in spirit because of the love that draws him toward God. Once the love of God has released him from self-love, the flame of divine love never ceases to burn in his heart and he remains united to God by an irresistible longing. As the Emissary says, "If we are beside ourselves, it is for the love of God; if we return to our senses, it is for you."

God loved the world enough that he gave us the only Son he ever fathered, so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life and not die.

This is the meaning of love: not that we loved God, but that he has loved us, so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life and not die.

### Prayer

Father of heaven and earth, please listen to our prayers and show us the way to peace in the world. 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

#### Deuteronomy 16.1-17

"Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover to your God YHWH, because in the month of Abib your God YHWH brought you out of Egypt during the night. And that is why you are to sacrifice the Passover to your God YHWH from the sheep and the cattle in the place where YHWH chooses to establish his name. You are to eat no leavened bread with it; for seven days you are to eat unleavened bread, that is, the bread of suffering—because you came out of the land of Egypt hurriedly—so that you will remember the day you came out of the land of Egypt your whole life long. And no yeast is to be found among you in all your territory for seven days, and the meat which you sacrifice on the first day at twilight is not to remain overnight until morning.

"You are not to sacrifice the Passover within any of the gates which your God YHWH is giving you, but only at the place your God YHWH chooses to make his name reside; it is there you are to sacrifice the Passover at twilight, as the sun sets, at the time you came out of Egypt. And you are to roast and eat it in the place your God YHWH chooses; and in the morning you are to turn back and go to your tents. You are to eat unleavened bread for six days, and on the seventh day there is to be a gathering sacred to your God YHWH. You are to do no work on it.

"You are then to count out seven weeks; begin the count of seven weeks from the time you begin the grain harvest. Then you are to keep the Feast of Weeks for your God YHWH with the tax of a free offering from your own hand, which you are to give in proportion as your God YHWH blesses you. You are to hold a celebration in honor of your God YHWH: you and your sons and daughters, your male and female slaves, the Levites within your gates, the foreigners and orphans and widows among you, at the place YHWH chooses to make his name reside. And you are to remember that you were slaves in Egypt; and you are to be careful to observe these regulations.

"You are to observe the Feast of Tents for seven days, when you have

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finished the grain and wine harvest. And you are to celebrate this feast with your sons and daughters, your male and female slaves, and the Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows who live within your gates. You are to keep this festival sacred to your God YHWH in the place YHWH chooses, because your God YHWH will bless you in all your produce and in all the work your hands do, so that you will in fact be happy.

"All your males are to appear before your God YHWH three times a year in the place he chooses: at the feast of the unleavened bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tents; and they are not to appear before YHWH empty-handed. Every man is to give what he is able to give, in proportion to the blessing your God YHWH has given him."

Your feast must be a time of celebration for you and your sons and daughters, and for the Levites, the foreigners, and orphans and widows; and then the Master will bless you and fill you with joy.

See, even now the messenger of good news comes over the mountain. He cries, "Peace! Be happy, Judah, and celebrate your feasts." And then the Master will bless you and fill you with joy.

# Second Reading A Treatise Against the Heresies by St. Irenaeus

The Church's offering, which the Master taught was to be made throughout the whole world, has been regarded by God as a pure sacrifice, and is acceptable to him. It is not that he needs sacrifice from us; it is that the one who makes the offering receives enhancement himself in the offering, provided that his gift is accepted. Both honor and love are shown to a king through a gift.

The Master wants us to make our offering in all sincerity and freedom from sin. He stated this when he said, "And so when you offer your gift at the altar and remember that your brother has a grievance against you, leave your gift in front of the altar and first go and come into harmony with your brother, and then come back and offer your gift."

We are to offer God the firstfruits of his creation, as Moses said, "You are not to come empty-handed into the presence of your God the Master." In showing gratitude to God for his gifts, human beings are accepted as pleasing to God, and so receive the honor that comes from God.

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It is not offerings as such that have met with disapproval. There were offerings in ancient times; there are offerings now. There were sacrifices among the people of Israel, and there are sacrifices in the Church. It is only the kind of offering that has changed; now it is an offering by free men, not by slaves. There is one and the same Master, but the character of an offering made by slaves is different from the one made by sons: their offerings bear the mark of freedom.

With God nothing happens without a purpose, and nothing without meaning and reason. Thus, the people of Israel would dedicate a tenth of their possessions to God; but those who have been given freedom devote everything they possess to God's use. They give it all to him, not simply what is worth less, and they do it cheerfully and freely because they hope for something greater, like the poor widow who put her whole living into God's treasury.

We must make an offering to God, and in every way be found pleasing to God the Creator, in healthy teaching, in sincere faith, in firm hope, in burning love, as we offer the firstfruits of the creatures that are his. The Church alone offers this pure gift to the Creator when it makes its offering to him from his creation, with gratitude.

We offer him what is his, and so we acknowledge publicly our communion and unity and declare our belief in the return to life of body and spirit. Just as bread from the earth, when it receives the blessing of God, is no longer ordinary bread but the Eucharist, made up of two elements, one earthly and the other heavenly, so our bodies, in receiving the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, because they have the hope of the return to life.

The law was only a shadow of the blessings to come, not a living copy of them. With the same sacrifices offered year after year, it can never bring human beings to completeness. The Prince made one offering, himself, and by virtue of it, he made those who believe in him holy forever.

The Prince loved us and gave himself over to death for us as an offering and sacrifice to God. The Prince made one offering, himself, and by virtue of it, he made those who believe in him holy forever.

#### Prayer

Father of heaven and earth, please listen to our prayers and show us the

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way to peace in the world. 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

Deuteronomy 18.1-22

This is what Moses said to the people:

"The priests and Levites—all of the tribe of Levi—are to have no share or inheritance with Israel; they are to eat what is offered to YHWH by fire, and consume his share; and that is why they are to have no inheritance among their relatives; YHWH is their inheritance, as he told them.

"And this is what the priests have a right to from the people who are offering a sacrifice, whether it is a bull or a sheep: they are to give the priest the shoulder, the jowls, and the stomach. The firstfruits of your grain and your new wine and oil, and the first of the fleece of the sheep are to be given to them; because your God YHWH has chosen them out of all your tribes to stand before him and give him service in the name of YHWH, and this is true of them and their descendants forever.

"So if a Levite comes from one of your communities where he has his home among all of Israel, to visit, as his heart may desire, the place YHWH chooses, he may perform service there in the name of his God YHWH just like all those of his relatives who are Levites and are in the presence of YHWH. They are to have equal shares of the food, in addition to what comes from the sale of his inheritance.

"When you come into the land which your God YHWH is giving you, you are not to follow the disgusting practices of those nations. There is not to exist among you anyone who makes his son or daughter walk through fire, or one who practices witchcraft, or a fortune-teller, one who interprets omens, any sorcerer, anyone who casts spells, any medium, spiritist, or anyone who calls up the dead. Everyone who does things like this is abhorrent to YHWH, and it is because of these

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disgusting practices that your God YHWH is driving them away from your presence. You are to be without blame in the presence of your God YHWH. These nations you are going to dispossess listened to fortunetellers and necromancers; but YHWH has not permitted *you* to do such things.

"Your God YHWH will bring forward from among you a prophet for you like me, someone who is one of your relatives. You are to listen to him, as you requested of your God YHWH at Horeb on the day you were gathered there, when you said, "Please keep us from hearing the voice of our God YHWH again, and do not let us see his great fire any more, or we will die."

"And YHWH told me, "What they said is good. I will bring a prophet forward like you from their relatives, and will put what I have to say in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him to say. And then if anyone does not listen to what I say as he speaks it in my name, I will make him pay the consequences. But any prophet who presumes to say anything in my name which I have not commanded him to speak, or who speaks in the name of some other god, is to die. And if you ask yourself, "How are we to know what words are the ones YHWH has not spoken?" When a prophet speaks in YHWH's name, and what he says does not happen or occur, then that is something that YHWH has not spoken; the prophet has said it presumptuously, and you are not to be afraid of him."

I will bring forward a prophet for them and I will place what I have to say in his mouth. He will tell them everything I command.

I am sending my own Son, the one I love; he is the real prophet who is to come into the world. He will tell them everything I command.

#### Second Reading

### The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy by the Second Vatican Council

The Prince is always present to his Church, especially in the actions of the liturgy. He is present in the sacrifice of the Mass, in the person of the minister (it is the same Prince who once offered himself on the cross who now offers himself by the ministry of priests) and most of all under the Eucharistic appearance. He is present in the sacraments by his power, in such a way that when someone gives the baptismal bath, it is the Prince himself who bathes the person. He is present in the words uttered, because he is the one who speaks when the holy Scriptures are read in the Church. Finally, he is present when the Church prays and sings, because he himself promised, "Where there are two or three gathered in my name, I am there present among them."

In fact, in this great work which gives perfect glory to God and brings holiness to human beings, the Prince is always joining in partnership with himself the bride he loves, the Church, who calls upon her Master and through him gives worship to the eternal Father.

It is therefore right to see the liturgy as an exercise of the priestly function of Prince Jesus, in which through signs addressed to the senses, man's sanctification is signified and, in a way proper to each of these signs, made effective, and in which public worship is celebrated in its completeness by the mystical body of Prince Jesus: that is, by the head and the other organs.

In accordance with this, every liturgical celebration, as an activity of the Prince who is the priest and of his body which is the Church, is a sacred action of a preeminent kind. No other action of the Church equals its title to power or its degree of effectiveness.

In the liturgy on earth we are given a foretaste and share in the liturgy of heaven, celebrated in the holy city of Jerusalem, the goal of our pilgrimage, where the Prince "is enthroned beside God as minister of the sanctuary and of the true Tent." With the whole company of heaven we sing a hymn of praise to the Master; and as we show reverence to the memory of the saints, we hope to have some share with them, and to partake in fellowship with them; "we wait for our Savior, our Master Prince Jesus," until "the one who is our life appears, and we appear with him in glory."

By an apostolic tradition taking its origin from the very day of the Prince's return to life, the Church celebrates the paschal mystery every eighth day, the day that is properly called the Master's day. On Sunday, the Christian faithful ought to gather, so that by listening to the words God utters and sharing in the Eucharist, they will be able to recall the suffering, death, and return to life of Master Jesus, and show their gratitude to God, who "has given them a new birth with a lively hope through the return to life of Prince Jesus from death." The Master's day is therefore the first and greatest festival, one to be set before the loving

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devotion of the faithful and impressed upon them, so that it will also be a day of joy and freedom from work. Other celebrations must not take precedence over it, unless they are in fact of the greatest importance, since it is the foundation and kernel of the whole liturgical year.

The Prince prays for us; he is our priest; he prays in us; he is our head; we pray to him; he is our God. And so let us always be aware of our prayer in him and his prayer in us.

When we turn to God in prayer, we must not separate ourselves from his Son. And so let us always be aware of our prayer in him and his prayer in us.

#### Prayer

Omnipotent and eternally alive God, please direct your love that is within us, so that our efforts in the name of your Son will bring mankind to unity and peace. 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

Moses said this to the people:

Deuteronomy 24.1-25.4

"When a man accepts a woman as his wife and marries her, and it happens that he is displeased with her because he has found some defilement about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, hands it to her, and sends her out of his household, and then after she has left his house and then becomes some other man's wife, and either he finds her displeasing divorces her by handing her another certificate and dismisses her, or this second husband who married her dies, the former husband is not to take her back after she has been defiled, because that is something abhorrent to YHWH, and you are not to bring sin on the land which your God YHWH is giving you as an inheritance.

"When a man has just married, he is not to go to war or be burdened with any business; he is to be free at home for one year, to bring happiness on the wife he has chosen.

"No one is to take as security for a loan an upper or lower millstone, because then he is taking away a person's livelihood as security.

"If anyone is found kidnaping any of his relatives who are descendants of Israel, and mistreats or sells that victim, the kidnapper is to die; and you will remove the evil from among you.

"Pay attention during an outbreak of leprosy to observe carefully and do everything that the priests and Levites instruct you; you are to be careful to act as I have commanded them. Remember what your God YHWH did to Miriam on the journey when you came out of Egypt.

"When you lend anything to a relative, you are not to go to his house to take the collateral. You are to stand outside, and your debtor will take the security out to you. And if the man is poor, you are not to keep the collateral overnight. You are to return the collateral to him in every case before the sun sets, so that he will be able to sleep in his own clothes, and this will count as virtue for you in the sight of your God YHWH.

"You are not to oppress a hired servant who is poor and destitute, whether this is one of your relatives or one of the foreigners who lives in your land and in your community. You are to give him his wages each day and not let the sun set upon this, because he is poor and is counting on it; otherwise, he will cry out against you to YHWH, and it will count as a sin for you.

"Fathers are not to be put to death for their children, nor are children to be put to death for their fathers; a person is to be put to death for his own sin.

"You are not to subvert the justice due a foreigner or orphan, nor take a widow's clothes as collateral for a loan. No, you are to remember that you were slaves in Egypt, and your God YHWH redeemed you from there; and that is why I command you to do this.

"When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf there in the field, you are not to go back to get it; it will be for foreigners, orphans, and widows, so that your God YHWH will bless you in every deed your hands perform. When you beat your olive trees, you are not to go over the branches a second time; what is left is for foreigners, orphans, and widows. When you gather grapes in your vineyard, you are not to glean it afterwards; this will be for foreigners, orphans, and

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widows. And you are to remember that you were slaves in the land of Egypt; and that is why I command you to do this.

"If there is a dispute between two parties and they bring it to court for the judges to settle it, and they acquit the innocent and condemn the guilty party, and if the guilty one receives a sentence of a beating, the judge is to make him lie down and be beaten in his presence in accordance with his guilt, with a definite number of blows. He may give him no more than forty blows, to prevent him from going further and beating him with a great many more blows, which would humiliate your relative in his sight.

"You are not to muzzle an ox when it is treading out grain."

Master, you have told us the truth: there is one God, and we are to love him with our whole heart; to love our neighbor as if he were ourselves is more than any holocaust or sacrifice.

To return a kindness is like an offering of fine flour; our Master God is delighted to see us turn away from evil. To love our neighbor as if he were ourselves is more than any holocaust or sacrifice.

### Second Reading

### Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, by the Second Vatican Council

Husband and wife, by the covenant of marriage, are no longer two, but one flesh. By their intimate union of persons and of actions they give mutual help and service to each other, experience the meaning of their unity, and gain an ever deeper understanding of it day by day.

This intimate union in the mutual self-giving of two persons, as well as the good of the children, demands full fidelity from both, and an indissoluble unity between them.

Our Master the Prince has abundantly blessed this richly complex love, which springs from the divine source of love and is founded on the model of his union with the Church.

In earlier times God met his people in a Treaty of love and fidelity. So now the Savior of mankind, the Bridegroom of the Church, meets Christian husbands and wives in the sacrament of matrimony. Further, he remains with them in order that, as he loved the Church and gave himself up for her, so husband and wife will be able, in mutual selfgiving, to love each other with perpetual fidelity.

True married love is caught up into God's love; it is guided and enriched by the redeeming power of the Prince and the saving action of the Church, so that the partners will be effectively led to God and receive help and strength in the sublime responsibility of parenthood.

Christian partners are therefore strengthened, and as it were consecrated, by a special sacrament for the duties and the dignity of their state. By the power of this sacrament, they fulfill their obligations to each other and to their family and are filled with the spirit of the Prince. This spirit pervades their whole lives with faith, hope, and love. Thus they promote their own perfection and each other's sanctification, and so contribute together to the greater glory of God. Hence, with parents leading the way by example and family prayer, their children-indeed, everyone within the family circle-will find it easier to make progress in natural virtues, in salvation and in holiness. Husband and wife, raised to the dignity and the responsibility of parenthood, will be zealous in fulfilling their task as educators, especially in the sphere of religious education, a task that is primarily their own.

Children, as active members of the family, contribute in their own way to the holiness of their parents. With the love of grateful hearts, with loving respect and trust, they will return the generosity of their parents and will stand by them as true sons and daughters when they meet with hardship and the loneliness of old age.

This is a great secret, but I am saying it about the Prince and his Community: the Prince loved the Community, and gave himself up for it.

A man must love his wife in the same way as he loves himself, and a woman must respect her husband. The Prince loved the Community, and gave himself up for it.

### Prayer

Omnipotent and eternally living God, please direct your love that is within us, so that our efforts in the name of your Son will bring mankind to unity and peace. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit

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



### First Reading

Deuteronomy 26.1-19

This is what Moses said to the people:

"And then, when you come into the land which your God YHWH is giving you as an inheritance, and you take it over and make your homes in it, you are to take some of the first of everything the ground produces, and bring it from your land that your God YHWH is giving you, and put it in a basket and go to the place your God YHWH chooses for the residence of his name. And you are to go to the one who is priest at that time and say to him, "I declare today to your God YHWH that I have come to the country that YHWH swore to our ancestors to give us."

"Then the priest is to take the basket out of your hand and set it down before the altar of your God YHWH; and you are to continue, 'My ancestors were Syrians, about to die, and they went down to Egypt and made their home there, and there were few of them; but there they became a great, mighty, and populous nation. But the Egyptians mistreated us, abused us, and laid hard slavery upon us. Then we called out to YHWH, the God of our ancestors, and YHWH heard our voice and looked on our mistreatment and our labor and our oppression. So YHWH brought us out of Egypt with a powerful fist on his outstretched arm, with great terror, and with miracles and wondrous acts. He has brought us to this place and given us this land, "a land flowing with milk and honey." And here now, I have brought the firstfruits of the land which you, YHWH, have given me.'

"Then you are to set it before your God YHWH, and give worship in the presence of your God YHWH. In this way, you are to enjoy every good thing which your God YHWH has given you and your family, to you and the Levites and the foreigners who live among you.

"When you have finished setting aside the whole tenth of your produce in the third year—the year of tithing—and have given it to the Levites, the foreigners, the orphans, and the widows, so that they will

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have food in your communities and be satisfied, they you are to say in the presence of your God YHWH, 'I have removed the holy tenth from my house and have given it to the Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows, in accordance with all the commandments you have imposed on me; I have not violated your commandments, and have not forgotten them. I have not eaten any of it while in mourning, and have not removed any of it for an unclean use, nor have I given any of it to the dead. I have obeyed the voice of my God YHWH, and have acted in accordance with all you have commanded. Please look down from your holy residence in heaven and bless your people Israel and the land you have given us just as you swore to our ancestors, "a land flowing with milk and honey."

"Today, your God YHWH commands you to observe these rules and regulations; and so you are to be careful to observe them with all your heart and your whole soul. Today you have made known that YHWH is to be your God, and that you will pattern your conduct on his guidelines and keep his rules, regulations, commandments, and orders, and that you will obey what he says. Also, YHWH has made known that you are to be his special people, just as he promised you, provided you keep all his commandments; and he will set you high above every nation he has made in praise and honor, so that you will be a holy people to your God YHWH, just as he has spoken."

You are a people God has made his own; once you were not his people, but now you are the people of God. In the past, you knew nothing of God's mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Because he loved you, the Master chose you and brought you out of the land of slavery. In the past, you knew nothing of God's merccy, but now you have received mercy.

### Second reading Detailed Rules for Monks by St. Basil the Great

Are there any words that can adequately describe God's gifts? They are so numerous it is impossible to count them; they are so great that any one of them demands our total gratitude in response.

Yet even though we cannot speak of it appropriately, there is one gift that no thoughtful person can ignore. God fashioned man in his own image and likeness; he gave him knowledge of himself; he endowed him

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with the ability to think, which raised him above all living creatures; he allowed him to take pleasure in the unimaginable beauties of paradise, and gave him control over everything on earth.

Then, when man was tempted by the snake and fell into sin, which led to death and all the sufferings associated with death, God still did not abandon him. He first gave man the Law to help him; he set angels over him to guard him; he sent the prophets to denounce vice and teach virtue; and he restrained man's evil impulses by warnings and roused his desire for virtue by promises. Often, as a warning, God showed him the respective ends of virtue and vice in other people. And in addition, when man continued in disobedience even after he had done all this, God did not desert him.

No, we were not abandoned by the Master's goodness. Even the insult we offered our Benefactor by despising his gifts did not destroy his love for us; just the opposite: though we were dead, our Master Prince Jesus restored us to life again, and in a way even more amazing than the fact itself, "because his condition was divine, and yet he did not find equality to God something he had to keep hold of, and emptied himself to take on the condition of a slave."

"He took our weaknesses upon himself and endured our pains. He was wounded for our sake so that we would be healed by his wounds." "He redeemed us from the curse by becoming a curse for our sake," and he submitted to the most shameful sort of death to elevate us to a life of glory. And he was not content merely to summon us back from death to life; he also bestowed on us the dignity of his own divine nature, and prepared us a place of eternal rest, where there will be happiness so intense as to surpass all human imagination.

Then how are we to repay the Master for all his goodness to us? He is so good that he asks for no compensation except our love; that is the only payment he wants. To speak of my own personal feelings, when I ponder all these blessings, I am overwhelmed by a kind of dread and numbness at the very possibility of ceasing to love God and of bringing disgrace upon the Prince because of my lack of recollection and my preoccupation with trivia.

Bless the Master, my soul, and never forget all his kindness; he rescues me from death and crowns me with mercy and love. The Master loved me and gave himself up to death for me; he rescues me from death and crowns me with mercy and love.

### Prayer

Omnipotent and eternally living God, please direct your love that is within us, so that our efforts in the name of your Son will bring mankind to unity and peace. 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

#### Deuteronomy 29.2-6, 10-29

Moses summoned all of Israel and said to them, "You have seen all that YHWH did in your presence in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh and all his slaves and his whole country. You saw the great troubles, the miracles, and all the astonishing things. But YHWH has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to listen, to this very day. And I have led you for forty years in the desert, and your clothes have not worn out on you, your sandals have not worn out on your feet, you have not eaten bread or drunk wine or anything like it, so that you would know that I, YHWH, am your God.

"All of you are standing today in the presence of your God YHWH: your leaders, your tribes, your elders, and your officers, all the men of Israel, your children, and your wives, as well as foreigners who live in your camps, from those who chop your wood to those who draw water for you, so that you will be parties of the Treaty which your God YHWH is making with you, and take part in the oath which your God YHWH makes with you today, so that he will set you up today as a people for himself, and so that he will be God for you, just as he has spoken to you, and just as he swore to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And I am concluding this Treaty and taking this oath, not simply with you, but with those who are not here today as well as those who are here.

"Now, you know that we used to live in the land of Egypt and that we came through the nations you passed through, and you saw their disgusting practices and the idols made of wood, stone, silver, and gold

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that they had. There is not to exist among you any man or woman, clan, or tribe, whose heart turns away from our God YHWH to go and serve the gods of these nations; there is to be no root among you that grows into such bitterness and poison.

"It is not to be thought of that a person who hears the words of this curse deceives himself in his heart, and says, 'I will have peace, even though I am following the dictates of my own heart' as though he were a drunk who wanted to be considered sober. No, YHWH will not spare him; because in that case, YHWH's anger and jealousy will flare up against that man, and every curse that is written in this book will settle on him, and YHWH will erase his name from under heaven. He will exile him from all the tribes of Israel and single him out for doom, in accordance with the curses that were written in this Book of the Law, so that the generations of your descendants that come after you and the foreigners who come from far away will say this, when they see the torment of that land and the sickness which YHWH has visited on it:

"The whole land is sulfur and burning salt; it has nothing planted on it, and nothing grows, not even grass; it is like Sodom and Gomorrah, Adamah, and Zeboiim after they were overthrown by YHWH's anger and rage.' And all the nations will say, 'Why has YHWH done this to this land? What does the heat of his fierce anger mean?' And people will answer, 'It is because they abandoned the Treaty which YHWH, the God of their ancestors, made with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt; they went and served other gods and worshiped them, and then YHWH's anger was roused against this land, and brought on it every curse that is written in this book. And YHWH uprooted them from their land in his rage and furious indignation, and drove them into another land, where they are today.'

"What is still private to our God YHWH and what has been revealed belong to us and to our descendants forever, so that we will be able to observe all that is said in this Law."

The Prince was cursed for our sake so that the blessing of Abraham would be able to include the pagans, and that through faith we could receive the promised Spirit.

God rescued us from the land of Egypt and set us free from the land of slavery, so that through faith we could receive the promised Spirit.

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### Second Reading A Sermon on the Song of Songs by St. Bernard

Where can weak people find a place of firm security and peace but in the Savior's wounds? Actually, the more secure my place there is, the more he can do to help me. The world may rage, my flesh may be heavy, and the devil may lay his snares, but I do not fall, because my feet are planted on a firm rock. I may have sinned seriously, and my conscience may be troubled, but it would not be in turmoil, because I would recall the Master's wounds: "He was wounded for our disobedience." Is there any sin so deadly that it cannot be pardoned by the Prince's death? And so if I keep this strong, effective remedy in mind, I can never again be terrified by the poisonousness of sin.

It is certain that the man who said, "My sin is too great to be pardoned" was wrong. He was speaking as if he were not one of the Prince's cells and had no part in his merits for him to claim as his own, in the way a cell in a body can claim what belongs to the head. In my own case, what can I take to myself from the heart of the Master who is overflowing with mercy? They pierced his hands and feet and opened his side with a spear; and through the openings of these wounds I can drink "honey from the rock and oil from the hardest stone": that is, I can "taste and see that the Master is sweet."

He was thinking thoughts of peace, and I did not know it, because "does anyone know the Master's mind, or has anyone been his adviser?" But the nail that pierced him has been the key to unlock the door, for me to see the Master's kindness. And what can I see as I look through the hole? The nail and the wound together cry out that God in the Prince was bringing the world into conformity to himself. "The sword pierced his soul and came close to his heart" so that he would be able to feel sympathy with me in my weakness.

It is through these sacred wounds we can see the secret of his heart, the great mystery of love, "the sincerity of his mercy that brought him to visit us from his high home." Where have your love, your mercy, and your sympathy shone more luminously than in your wounds, my tender, gentle Master of mercy? No one has more mercy than to give up his life for those who are doomed to death.

My deserving anything comes from his mercy, because I deserve a reward to the extent that he pities me. And if the Master possesses many mercies, then I am rich in my privileges. That is, even if I am aware of

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many sins, what does it matter? "God's favor has overflowed where sin has been heaped up." And if "The Master's mercies exist from all ages for ever," I will also "sing about the Master's mercies forever." Or will I sing about my own virtue? "No, Master, I will only remember your virtue." But that too is my own; because God has made you my virtue.

He was pierced for our infractions; he was crushed for our sins. The punishment that gives us peace is visited on him, and we are healed by his wounds.

The Prince took our sins on his own body, and was nailed to the cross, so that we would die to sin and live for holiness. We are healed by his wounds.

### Prayer

Omnipotent and eternally living God, please direct your love that is within us so that our efforts in the name of your Son will bring mankind unity and peace. 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

Deuteronomy 30.1-20

This was what Moses said to the people:

"When all of these blessings and curses I have proposed to you happen to you, and you remember them among the nations where your God YHWH drives you, and you and your children return to your God YHWH and obey what he has said in everything I am commanding you today with all your heart and soul; then your God YHWH will bring you back from captivity, have pity on you, and gather you once again from all the nations through which your God YHWH has scattered you.

"Even if any of you are driven to the farthest places under heaven, your God YHWH will bring you back together. And then your God YHWH will bring you into the land your ancestors possessed and you will take possession of it yourselves; and your God YHWH will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you will love your God YHWH with your whole heart and your whole soul, so that you will continue to live.

"And then your God YHWH will put all these curses on your enemies and those who hate you and persecuted you; and you will obey once again what your God YHWH said and follow all his commandments which I am imposing on you today. Your God YHWH will give you an abundance in everything your hands do, in your own yield of offspring, increases in your livestock, and in the produce of your fields for your good, because your God YHWH will take pleasure in your benefits as he took pleasure in your ancestors, if you obey your God YHWH's voice and keep his commandments and regulations that are written in the Book of the Law, and if you turn to your God YHWH with all your heart and soul.

"You see, this commandment I impose on you today is no secret from you, and is not something at a distance from you. It is not up in the sky, for you to say, 'Who can rise up into the sky and bring it down to us for us to hear and perform it?' Nor is it beyond the ocean, for you to say, 'Who will travel over the ocean for us and bring it to us, for us to hear and perform it?' No, what is said is very near you, in your mouths and your hearts, so that you can do it.

"Now what I have done is set before you life and goodness, death and harm, because I am commanding you today to love your God YHWH, to walk along his paths, and to keep his commandments, rules, and regulations, so that you will continue to live and multiply, and your God YHWH will bless you in the land you are going into to possess.

"But if your hearts turn away and you do not listen and are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, I am making it known to you today that you will certainly die out; you will not live for long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess.

"I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you that I have set before you life and death, a blessing and a curse; and so choose life, so that both you and your descendants will continue to live, to love your God YHWH, obey his voice, and cling to him, because he is your life and your longevity, and so that you will have a home in the land which YHWH swore he would give your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

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You will look for me, and when you look with your whole heart, you will find me; I will let myself be found by you, says the Master; I will restore your fortunes.

Look, and you will find what you are looking for; knock, and the door will open. I will let myself be found by you, says the Master; I will restore your fortunes.

### Second Reading

# A Sermon by John the Serene

"The Master is my light and my rescue; can anyone frighten me?" How great that servant was who knew how he was given light, where it came from, and what sort of man he was when he was favored with that light. The light he saw was not the one that fades at dusk, it was "the light which no eye has seen." Souls illuminated by this light do not fall into sin or stumble into vice.

Our Master said, "Do your traveling while you have the light in you." What other light did he mean but himself? Because it was he who said, "I have come as a light into the world," so that those who have eyes will not see and the blind will receive "the light." Therefore, the Master is our light, the sun of virtue and honesty, who has shone on his Catholic Church diffused throughout the world. The prophet spoke as a metaphor for the Church when he cried, "The Master is my light and my rescue; can anyone frighten me?"

A spiritual man who has had it shine on him does not totter or leave the path, but puts up with anything. Since he glimpses our true country from a distance, he puts up with reverses; he is not dismayed by what belongs to time, and finds his strength in God. He lowers his pride and perseveres, and has patience because of his humility. That true light "which shines on every man who comes into the world" bestows itself on those who respect it, and shines where it pleases, on whomever it pleases, and reveals itself as the will of the Son of God directs.

When this light begins to shine on a man who "sat in darkness and the shadow of death," in the darkness of evil and the shadow of sin, he is shocked, he brings himself up short, he regrets and is ashamed of his misdeeds, and says, "The Master is my light and my rescue; can anyone frighten me?" This rescue is tremendous, my brothers and sisters, if it is not afraid of sickness or fatigue, and disregards pain. And so we should cry out in the fullest sense, not only with our voices but our very souls,

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"The Master is my light and my rescue; can anyone frighten me?" If he shines on me and saves me, who can intimidate me? Even if the dark shadows of evil suggestions crowd around me, "the Master is my light." They can approach, but cannot win; they can lay siege to our hearts, but they cannot conquer them. Though the blindness of desire attacks us, we need only say again, "The Master is my light." Because he is our strength; he gives himself to us, and we give ourselves to him. Hurry to this physician while you can, or you may not be able to find him when you want him.

Please send out wisdom, Master, from your glorious throne to be with me in my daily labors, so that I will know what pleases you.

Master, please give me the wisdom that is enthroned beside you, so that I will know what pleases you.

#### Prayer

Omnipotent, eternally living God, please direct you love that is within us, so that our efforts in the name of your Son will bring mankind to unity and peace. 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

#### Deuteronomy 31.1-15, 23

When Moses had said all this to Israel, he told them, "I am one hundred twenty years old today; I can no long move about freely; and YHWH has told me, 'You are not to cross over this Jordan River.' Your God YHWH himself is crossing over in front of you; he will destroy these nations in your path, and you will dispossess them. It will be Joshua who crosses over in front of you, as YHWH has said. And YHWH will do to those people what he did in destroying Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites and their land: YHWH will hand them over to you, for you to do to them everything I have commanded. Be strong and courageous; do not be afraid or intimidated by them; because it is your God YHWH who is going with you. He will not leave you or abandon you."

Then Moses called Joshua over and told him in the presence of the whole of Israel, "Be strong and brave, because you are to go with this people to the land which YHWH has sworn to their ancestors to give them; and you will be the one who causes them to inherit it. And it is YHWH who is going in front of you; he will not leave you or abandon you, and so do not be afraid or intimidated."

Then Moses wrote down this Law and gave it to the descendants of Levi, who carried the Chest containing YHWH's Treaty, as well as to all of the elders of Israel. And Moses gave them these commands: "At the end of every seven years, at the proper time in the year of release, at the Festival of Tents, when all of Israel comes to appear before your God YHWH in the place he chooses, you are to read this Law out to Israel as they listen. Gather the people, men, women, and children, and the foreigners who live in your communities, so that they will hear it and learn to hold your God YHWH in reverence and carefully observe every word in this Law; and so that their descendants, who have not known it, will hear it and learn reverence for your God YHWH as long as you live in the land which you are crossing the Jordan to possess."

Then YHWH told Moses, "Now the time is coming for you to die; call Joshua and present yourselves in the Meeting Tent, so that I can install him." So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves in the Meeting Tent, and YHWH appeared at the tent as a pillar of cloud, which stood above the door of the tent. Then YHWH installed Joshua son of Nun, and said, "Be strong and brave, because you will bring the descendants of Israel into the land I swore to give them, and I will be with you."

Be strong and brave, because your Master God is going with you. He is going in front of you; there is nothing for you to be afraid of.

The Master will be at your side to keep your foot from tripping. He is going in front of you; there is nothing for you to be afraid of.

#### Second Reading A Commentary on the Psalms by John Fisher

First God freed Israel from the bondage of Egypt by performing many signs and wonders. He permitted them to cross the Red Sea dryshod. He fed them in the desert with food from heaven in the form of

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manna and quail. When they were suffering from thirst, he produced an overflowing spring of water from the hardest rock. He gave them victory over all the enemies who made war against them. He forced the river to flow backward for a time. He divided the promised land and distributed it among them according to the number of their tribes and families.

Yet even though he treated them so lovingly and generously, the Israelites were ungrateful and seemed forgetful of all this. They abandoned the worship of God and more than once they were guilty of the abominable sin of idolatry.

Then he also took pity on us, "when we were pagans who went off to mute idols wherever we were led." He severed us from the wild olive tree of paganism and, breaking our natural branches, he grafted us onto the true olive tree of Judaism and made us share in the root of his grace and richness. Finally, "he did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, as an offering and a sacrifice to God in a fragrant odor, so that he would redeem us from all our iniquity and cleanse for himself an acceptable people."

Now all these things are not merely certain arguments but also clear proof of his deep love and kindness for us. And yet we are the most ungrateful of men. Indeed, we have gone beyond the bounds of ingratitude: we give no thought to his love, nor do we recognize the extent of his kindnesses to us. Rather we reject the one who lavishes so many favors and even appear to despise him; and the remarkable mercy that he has continually shown to sinners does not move us to form our lives and conduct according to his most holy command.

Clearly these things are worthy to be written down in the second generation so as to preserve their memory for ever. Thus all who are still to be counted among Christians will know the great kindness of God toward us and never cease singing his divine praises.

In your meetings, bless God. Praise the Master, all you descendants of Israel.

Sing a new song to the Master; all the earth is to sing to the Master. Praise the Master, all you descendants of Israel.

### Prayer

Omnipotent and eternally living God, please direct your love that is

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within us, so that our efforts in the name of your Son will bring mankind unity and peace. 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

#### Deuteronomy 32.48-52, 34.1-12

Then YHWH told Moses on that same day, "Go up this Mount Nebo, in the Abarim Mountains, in the land of Moab across from Jericho, and look over the land of Canaan, which I am giving to Israel's descendants to possess; and you are to die on the mountain you have climbed, and join your people, just as your brother Aaron died on Mount Hor and joined his people. The reason is that you broke faith with me among the descendants of Israel at the river of Meribah-Kadesh in the Desert of Zin in not revealing my holiness to the assembled descendants of Israel. You will look upon the land that faces you, even though you will not go into that land I am giving Israel's descendants."

Then Moses climbed from the plains in Moab up Mount Nebo, to the promontory of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho; and YHWH showed him the whole land of Gilead as far as Dan, all of Naphthali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, as well as the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, and toward the south, the plain of the Valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, and as far as Zoar. And YHWH told him, "This is the land I swore to give Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, when I told them I would give it to their descendants. I have allowed your eyes to see it, but you are not to cross over there."

And so YHWH's servant Moses died there in the land of Moab, as YHWH predicted, and he was buried in a valley opposite Beth-Peor in the land of Moab; but no one knows to this day where his grave is. Moses was one hundred twenty years old when he died; his eyes had not grown dim, nor had his natural vigor failed him. And the descendants of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab for thirty days, after which the time of weeping and mourning for Moses was over.

Now Joshua, son of Nun, was full of the spirit of wisdom, because

Moses had laid his hands on him; and so the descendants of Israel listened to him, and did as YHWH commanded Moses.

But since then there has not appeared in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom YHWH knew face to face. He had no equal in all the miracles and astounding deeds YHWH sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, in the presence of Pharaoh and all his servants and throughout the land, and for the might and terrifying power Moses exhibited in the sight of all of Israel.

Your feast is to be a time of celebration for you and your sons and daughters, as well as the Levites, foreigners, orphans, and widows; and then the Master will bless you and fill you with joy.

Yes, even now the messenger of good news is coming over the mountains. "Peace!" he calls. "Enjoy yourself, Judah, and celebrate your feasts!" And then the Master will bless you and fill you with joy.

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

In the face of death, the enigma of human existence reaches its climax. Man is not only the victim of pain and the progressive deterioration of the body; he is also, and more deeply, tormented by the fear of final extinction. But instinctive judgment of his heart is right when he shrinks from, and rejects, this idea of a total collapse and definitive end of his own person. He carries within him the seed of eternity, which cannot be reduced to matter alone, and so he rebels against death. All efforts of technology, however useful they may be, cannot calm his anxieties; the biological extension of his life-span cannot satisfy the desire inescapably present in his heart for a life beyond this life.

Imagination is completely helpless when confronted with death. Yet the Church, instructed by divine revelation, affirms that man has been created by God for a destiny of happiness beyond the reach of earthly trials. Moreover, the Christian faith teaches that bodily death, to which man would not have been subject if he had not sinned, will be conquered; the almighty and merciful Savior will restore man to the wholeness that he had lost through his own fault. God has called man, and still calls him, to be united in his whole being in perpetual communion with himself in the immortality of the divine life. This

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victory has been gained for us by the risen Prince, who by his own death has freed man from death.

Faith, presented with solid arguments, offers every thinking person the answer to his questionings concerning his future destiny. At the same time, it enables him to be one in the Prince with his loved ones who have been taken from him by death, and gives him hope that they have entered true life with God.

Certainly, the Christian is faced with the necessity, and the duty, of fighting against evil by many trials, and of undergoing death. But by entering the Paschal mystery and being made like the Prince in death, he will look forward, strong in hope, to the return to life.

This is true not only of Christians but also of all men of good will, in whose heart grace is invisibly at work. Since the Prince died for every man, and the ultimate calling of man is in fact one and the same, that is, a divine calling, we must hold that the Holy Spirit offers to everyone the possibility of being united with this paschal mystery in a way known only to God.

Such is the great mystery of man, enlightening believers through the Christian revelation. Through the Prince and in the Prince, light is thrown on the enigma of pain and death which overwhelms us without his Good News to teach us. The Prince has returned to life, and destroyed death by his own death; he has given us the free gift of life, so that as sons in the Son, we are able to call out in the Spirit, and say, "Abba." "Papa."

The Master is my light and my rescue; who can make me afraid? The Master is my life's refuge; who can intimidate me?

Even if I walk in a valley dark as death, I will fear no harm, because you are there beside me. The Master is my life's refuge; who can intimidate me?

#### Prayer

Omnipotent and eternally living God, please direct your love that is within us so that our efforts in the name of your Son will bring mankind to unity and peace. 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

1Thessalonians 1.1-2.12

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, to the people of Thessalonica who are a community in God the Father and our Master, Prince Jesus:

God's blessings on you, and peace.

We keep thanking God for all of you, as we mention you in our prayers; we never stop recalling in the presence of God our father what you have done in faith, how hard you have worked in love, and how long you have persevered in hope for our Master, Prince Jesus; because we can see, brothers and sisters God loves so much, how you were chosen, since the report of the good news did not come to you just in words; it came in power, in the holy spirit, and in a great deal of confidence in its truth; it was just what you know we were like with you, for your sake.

And you yourselves began to act as we did, and as the Master did, since you accepted what we said with the joy of the holy spirit, even in the face of severe hardship, and this has made you an example for the believers all over Macedonia and Greece. You are the ones who have spread the news about the Master—and not just in Macedonia and Greece; your faith in God has gone everywhere, so that we really do not need to say anything; the people we come to already have heard from you about how we made a visit to you, how you turned to God from worshiping idols, how you became slaves of the real God who is alive, and how you are waiting for his son Jesus to come from heaven and raise the dead and save us from the punishment that is coming.

And you, brothers and sisters, know yourselves that our trip to you was not a waste of time. We had, as you realize, suffered a great deal and been made fools of in Philippi; but we found courage in God and spoke up, and reported God's good news to you, in spite of the struggle it was.

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That was because what we do on your behalf does not come from a mistake, or from hypocrisy or fraud; we deliver the good news to you in the same form that God found that we deserved having it entrusted to us; we say what pleases the God who tests our hearts, not what men find attractive.

What we have said has never been to make people feel good, as you know; and God knows that it has never been a cloak for greed. We have never cared about what people think of us, either when we were with you or anyone else, though we could have demanded respect as emissaries of the Prince. No, we were as gentle with you as a nurse is with her children. That was how tender and loving we were when we decided to give you not only the report of God's good news, but our own souls; you were that dear to us. Remember, brothers and sisters, how we sweated and slaved; we took on work night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you as we were delivering the report of God's good news to you.

You know as well as God does how holy, honest, and faultless our conduct was to you believers; and you are just as well aware how we treated each of you individually, the way a father treats his children, and challenged and encouraged you, and gave you an example of how to behave as the God who is calling you to his kingdom and glory has a right to expect you to behave.

God brought you back to himself to serve the true and living God and to wait for the day when his Son Jesus comes down from heaven, the Son he brought back to life, Jesus, the one who is saving us from the punishment that is coming.

May God make your hearts overflow with love, and may he confirm your hearts in holiness for the day when our Master Prince Jesus comes: Jesus, the one who is saving us from the punishment that is coming.

# Second Reading A letter to Smyrna by St. Ignatius of Antioch

Ignatius, known as Theophorus, to the Community of God the Father and his beloved Prince Jesus in Smyrna in Asia. I wish all of you joy in a spotless spirit and the Word of God, by whose mercy you have won every gift and are deprived of none of them, since you are filled with

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faith and love, and are loved by God and productive in your holiness.

I am overjoyed at the glory of Prince Jesus as God, since he is the one responsible for your wisdom; and I am well aware of the perfection of your unshakeable faith. You are like people who have been nailed body and soul to Prince Jesus's cross, and are strengthened in love by his blood.

Speaking of the Master, you firmly believe that he was "a material descendant of David," but God's son by the will and power of God; that he really was born from the Virgin and was bathed by John "so that everything that is virtuous will be completed"; that he really was nailed to a cross in his material body for our sake and suffered this under Pontius Pilate and the Tetrarch Herod, and that we are the result of his blessed suffering. And in this way, by his return to life he lifted the standard over his sacred and faithful people for all time, whether they are Judeans or Gentiles, in the one body of his Community. That is, he endured all this for us, to rescue us; and he really underwent the suffering and just as truly returned from death.

In my own case, I am convinced that he was reunited with his body even after his return to life. When he visited the Rock and his companions, he told them, "Take hold of me and touch me and see that I am not a spirit without a body." And as soon as they touched him, they believed, and grasped his body and his spirit both. And this was the reason they despised death and conquered it. Further, after his return to life, the Master ate and drank with them like a real human being, even though in spirit he was united with his Father.

And so I am giving you serious instruction on these points, my dear friends, even though I am aware that you do believe them to be true.

Through the Law, I died to the Law to live for God. I still live in this human body, but I now live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me.

I have been nailed to the cross with the Prince, and it is not I who live now; the one who lives in me is the Prince, who loved me and gave himself up for me.

#### Prayer

Dear Master, our God, please help us to love you with all our hearts, and

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to love every human being in the way you love them. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God through all the ages of ages. Amen.



#### First Reading

#### 1 Thessalonians 2.13-3.13

And this is why we never stop thanking God, because when you listened to what we said about God, you did not accept it as human talk, but for what it really is: words God is saying as he acts within you when you believe. And so you became like God's communities in Judea, in Jesus the Prince, because you have had happen to you from your countrymen the same thing that they suffered from the Judeans, the ones who killed Master Jesus and the prophets and kept hounding us—and instead of pleasing God, and in direct opposition to all the people, they kept us from speaking to the Gentiles so they could be saved; and kept piling up their sins all the time right to the brim. And God's punishment has finally fallen on them.

But when we had to leave you for a short while—in body, not in heart—we were terribly anxious to see your faces again. So we kept planning to come back to you; I, Paul, tried at least twice; but Satan kept us from it. After all, what hope or joy or laurel crown do we have except you to wear proudly round our heads, as we stand in the presence of our Master Jesus when he appears again? You are our glory and joy.

And so, when we could not stand it any longer, we decided to have me remain alone in Athens and sent Timothy, our brother and God's coworker in reporting the good news about the Prince, for him to keep you firm and give you encouragement in your belief, so you would not be shaken by these hardships. Because you know that that is what we are destined for; when we were there with you, we predicted that we were all going to have hardship; and that is what happened and that is what you found out. That was why, when even I could not bear it any more,

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I sent him to find out about your belief, because I was afraid that the tempter would have tempted you and my work would have been a waste.

But Timothy has just come back to us from you, with a good report about your belief and love; he said that you still keep pleasant memories of us, and that you would like to see us as much as we would like to see you. This has encouraged us, brothers and sisters; you have put heart in us in our difficulties and hardships with your belief; because our life now depends on your standing straight in the Master. How can we thank God enough for all the joy you have given us before our God as we pray night and day to be allowed to see your faces and to build up whatever remains to be built in your belief?

I hope that our father God himself and our Master Jesus will show us the way to you, and that the Master will make your love fill up and overflow toward each other and toward everyone, just as we love you; so that he will keep your hearts blameless and firm in holiness before God our father when our Master Jesus joins his sacred people.

May the Master be generous in making your hearts overflow with love for each other and for everyone, and may he confirm your hearts in holiness.

May our Master himself inspire your hearts with courage, and may he confirm your hearts in holiness.

## Second Reading

## A Commentary on the Psalms by St. Hilary of Poitiers

"See how good it is and how pleasant for brothers to live together in unity." It is good for brothers and sisters to live together in unity, because when they do, their association creates the community which is the Church. The term "brothers" describes the bond of affection that arises from their singleness of purpose.

We read that when the Emissaries first delivered the proclamation of the Good News, the main teaching they gave was summed up in this saying: "The hearts and minds of all the believers were the same." So it is fitting for the people of God to be brothers and sisters under one Father, to live in harmony under one roof, and to be organs of one body.

It is pleasant and good for brothers to live together in unity. The prophet gave a comparison for this good and pleasant activity when he

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said, "It is like the scented oil upon the head which runs down over Aaron's beard onto the collar of his robe." Aaron's oil was made of the perfumes used to anoint a priest. It was God's decision to have his priest have this consecration first, and that our Master would also be anointed, though not visibly, "by those who are joined with him." Aaron's anointing did not belong to this world; it was not done with the horn used for kings, but "with the oil of gladness." So afterward, Aaron was called the Anointed, as the Law prescribed.

When this oil is poured over men whose hearts are impure, it extinguishes their lives; but when it is received as an anointing of love, it gives off the sweet odor of harmony with God. As Paul says, "We are the pleasant fragrance of the Prince." Hence, just as it was pleasing to God when Aaron was anointed with this oil, so it is good and pleasant for brothers and sisters to live together in unity.

Now the oil ran down the head to his beard. A beard adorns a man of mature years. We must not be children before the Prince except in the restricted Scriptural sense of being children in evil, but not in our way of thinking. Paul calls all those who are weak in faith "children," because they are too feeble to take solid food, and still need milk. As he says, "I fed you with milk rather than the solid food you were not yet ready for; and you are still not ready."

We are all one body in the Prince, and in this one body we are all parts of each other; yet the degree of the gift the Prince gives each of us is different.

We were all bathed into the one Spirit, and all of us has been given the one Spirit to drink; yet the degree of the gift the Prince gives each of us is different.

#### Prayer

Dear Master, our God, please help us to love you with all our hearts, and to love everyone as you love them. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



#### First Reading

## 1 Thessalonians 4.1-18

So there is only one thing left, brothers and sisters, for us to ask you. Please, in the name of Master Jesus, behave and be pleasing to God as you heard us explain to you—behave as you have been behaving, only more so.

You know what the orders were that we gave you from Master Jesus. This is God's will for you, and your holiness: for you to keep away from sexual wrongs, for each of you to know how to keep possession of his organism in holiness and honor, and not let desire rule him as the pagans and those who do not know God do, and to know how not to be in competition with or take advantage of his brother or sister in what he does; the Master will make you pay for all of this, as we told you before and made very clear. God called you to holiness, not uncleanness; and anyone who pays no attention to these rules is not ignoring a man; he is ignoring God, who is bestowing on you his holy spirit.

You do not need to have me write anything about brotherly love; you are already taught by God how to care for each other; and you are practicing it toward all your brothers and sisters in the whole of Macedonia. We can only appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to do more of it; try hard to be even-tempered and to mind your own business; and work with your hands, as we told you, so your behavior will be decent toward outsiders and you will not be dependent on anyone.

But I do want to say something, brothers and sisters, about those who have fallen asleep, so you will not be grieving like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and came back to life; and God will do the same thing for those who have fallen asleep with Jesus; he will bring them back with him.

And we tell you this as something that the Master has said: those of us who are left alive when the Master comes out of seclusion will have no advantage over the ones who have fallen asleep; because the Master himself, when the call comes—at the voice of the archangel and the sound of God's trumpet—will come down from heaven; and then those who died in the Prince will come back to life first, and afterwards those of us who are left alive will be lifted up with them into the clouds to meet

## Cuesday

the Master in the air; and then we will be forever with the Master in this way. So encourage each other with what I have just said.

At the word of command, at the call of the archangel's voice and the sound of God's trumpet, the Master himself will come down from heaven; he will collect the ones he has chosen from the four winds, and from the depths of the earth to the heights of heaven.

When the Son of Man comes, he will send out his angels with a mighty trumpet blast; he will collect the ones he has chosen from the four winds, and from the depths of the earth to the heights of heaven.

## Second reading Treatise against Heresies by St. Irenaeus

The Word of God became man, the Son of God became the Son of Man, so that he could unite man with himself and make him by adoption a son of God. Only by being united to one who is immune himself could we be preserved from death and decay, and how else could this union have been achieved if he had not first become what we are? How else could what can decay and die in us have been swallowed in his incorruptibility and immortality, so that we could receive adoptive sonship? And so the Son of God, our Master, the Word of the Father, is also the son of man; he became the son of man by a human birth from Mary, a member of the human race.

The Master has himself given us a sign here below and in the heights of heaven, a sign that man did not ask for because he never dreamed that such a thing was possible. A virgin became pregnant and bore a son who is called Emmanuel, which means "God is with us." He came down to the earth here below in search of the sheep that was lost, the sheep that was in fact his own creature; and then rose into the heights of heaven to offer the Father and entrust to his care the human race that he had found again.

The Master himself became the firstfruits of the return to life of mankind, and when its time of punishment for disobedience is over, the rest of the body, to which the whole human race belongs, will rise from the grave as the head has done. By God's help it will grow and be strengthened in all its joints and muscles, with each cell in its proper place in the body. There are many rooms in the Father's house because the body has many cells. God put up patiently with man when he fell because he foresaw the victory that would be his through the Word. Weakness allowed strength its full play, and so revealed God's kindness and power.

The Prince has been brought back to life, as the firstfruits of the harvest when all the dead will return to life. Just as in Adam everyone dies, so in the Prince everyone will be brought back to life.

Death came through a man, and the return to life from the dead has also come through a man. Just as in Adam everyone dies, so in the Prince everyone will be brought back to life.

#### Prayer

Dear Master, our God, please help us to love you with all our hearts and to love everyone as you love them. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



#### First Reading

## 1 Thessalonians 5.1-28

Of course, brothers and sisters, as to the time and date of this, you do not need to have us write anything, because you know perfectly well that the Master's day will come like a thief in the night. When people are talking about peace and security, suddenly disaster will fall on them, the way labor pains begin in a pregnant woman; and there will be no escape.

But you, brothers and sisters, are not in the dark, for the day to surprise you like a thief; you are all children of light and children of the day. We do not belong to night or darkness, and so we must not be asleep like everyone else; we have to keep awake and stay sober. Sleepers sleep at night, and drunkards are drunk at night; and so since we belong to the day, we should stay sober, and "put on the armor" of belief and love, and "the helmet" of the hope of "rescue." God has not made us for punishment; he has made us able to buy our rescue through our Master Prince Jesus, who died for us so that we could live together with him—

## Wednesday

whether we are awake or asleep. So encourage each other and build up each other's strength—as you are doing.

We would also ask you, brothers and sisters, to give recognition to those who are working hard and leading you in the Master, and advising you on what to do. Show them as much respect as possible in love because of what they are doing.

Be at peace with yourselves.

One more thing, brothers and sisters. Please do this: let the disorderly members know what they are doing, give support to the faint-hearted members, help out the weak ones, and put up with everyone. Be careful not to get even with a person who has cheated you by cheating him; always do good to each other—and to everyone.

Be happy all the time; keep praying; thank God for everything; this is God's will for you in Jesus the Prince.

Do not choke off the Spirit, and do not sneer at what is said under inspiration; but do examine all of it, and keep only what is good and throw out any form of what is bad.

May the God of peace make you completely holy; may he make your spirit and soul and body into one whole, blameless person and keep it that way until our Master, Prince Jesus joins us. He has called you, and he can be trusted; he will do it.

Brothers and sisters, pray for us too.

A holy kiss to all the brothers and sisters.

It is my wish in the Master to have this letter read to all the brothers and sisters.

The blessing of our Master Prince Jesus be on you.

God has not destined us to endure his punishments, but to win rescue through our Master Prince Jesus, who died for us, so that we could live in him.

God rescued us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of his own beloved Son, who died for us, so that we could live in him.

## Second Reading

## Treatise on Spiritual Perfection by Diadochus of Photice

The light of true knowledge makes it possible to distinguish without being mistaken between good evil. Then the path of virtue, which leads to the Sun of Virtue, brings the mind into the infinite light of knowledge, since it never fails to search out the love of God with complete confidence.

And so, we must maintain great stillness of mind, even in the middle of our struggles. We will then be able to distinguish between the different types of thoughts that come to us; and we will store in our memory those that are good, and sent by God; we will reject those that are evil and inspired by the devil. A comparison with the sea may help us: A calm ocean lets the fishermen see down into its depths; and no fish can hide there and escape being seen. But a stormy sea becomes murky when it is shaken up by the wind, and it now hides the depths that it revealed in its placid state—and the fisherman's skill is useless.

Only the Holy Spirit can purify the mind; unless the strong man enters and robs the thief, the loot will not be recovered. And so in every way, but especially by peace of soul, we must try to give the Holy Spirit a resting place; and then we will have the light of knowledge shining within us all the time, and it will show up for what they are all the dark and hateful temptations that come from demons; and not only will it show them up, the exposure to this holy, glorious light will also tremendously weaken their power.

This is why the Emissary says, "Do not choke off the Spirit." The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of goodness; do not sadden him by your evil actions and thoughts, and by doing so deprive him of the defense his light gives you. In his own being, which is eternal and vivifying, he is not choked off; but when he is saddened, he turns away and leaves the mind in darkness, and deprived of the light of knowledge.

The mind is capable of tasting and accurately distinguishing whatever is presented to it. Just as when our health is good, we can tell the difference between good and bad food by our bodily sense of taste and are attracted to what is healthy; in the same way, when our mind is strong and free from all anxiety, it is able to taste the riches of divine consolation, and to preserve, through love, the memory of this taste. This teaches us what is best with absolute certainty. As St. Paul says, "My

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prayer is that your love will increase more and more in knowledge and insight, and in this way enable you to choose what is best."

Bless the Master God all the time, and ask him to guide you in his paths, so that everything you do will be rooted in him.

Ask God to guide you so that you will do what is pleasing to him, in sincerity and with all your strength, so that everything you do will be rooted in him.

#### Prayer

Dear Master, our God, please help us to love you with all our hearts and to love everyone as you love them. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



#### First Reading

2 Thessalonians 1.1-12

Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy to the people of Thessalonica who form a community in God our Father and our Master Prince Jesus:

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

We really have to keep thanking God for you, brothers and sisters; you deserve it, because your belief is growing so great and the love you have for each other is becoming so full that we keep telling everyone in God's communities how proud we are of you, and of your perseverance and belief in all the oppression and hardship you have undergone.

What has happened is evidence of how just God's verdict is: you are coming to deserve having God as your king by what you are suffering. And wouldn't it be fitting for God to oppress the ones oppressing you—and put an end to your torture—when Master Jesus comes out of his seclusion in heaven in fiery flame with the angels of his power? Then he will "pass sentence on those who do not know" God and the ones who do not pay attention to the report of the good news about our Master Jesus; these people are facing the "vengeance of eternal

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destruction far from the face of the Master" and "from the resplendence of his power," on the day when he comes to be known for what he is among his holy people, filling all the believers with awe—because they believed the evidence we put before you.

This is why we keep praying for you, so you will deserve what God has called you to, and will complete every good plan you have and every deed you do in the power of your faith; and in that way the name of our Master Jesus will have great respect among you, and you will be respected in him because of the gift of our God and Master, Prince Jesus.

The Master will be glorified in his sacred people, and will be adored by everyone who has believed in him.

The Master is faithful in everything he says and loving in everything he does; and will be adored by everyone who has believed in him.

#### Second Reading

## Catecheses by St. Cyril of Jerusalem

The Catholic Church is proud of every action of the Prince; but her supreme pride is the cross. In complete awareness of this, Paul says, "God forbid that I would brag about anything but the cross of our Master Prince Jesus."

At Siloam, there was a sense of amazement, and rightly so. A man born blind received his sight. But what importance does this have, when there are so many blind people in the world? Lazarus came back from death, but even this only affected Lazarus. What of those countless numbers who have died because of their sins? Those five miraculous loaves fed five thousand people; but this is a tiny number in comparison to those all over the world who were starved because of ignorance. After eighteen years, a woman was freed from slavery to Satan; but are we not all shackled by the chains of our own sins?

For us all, however, the cross is the winner's laurel crown; it is brought light to those blinded by ignorance; it has released those enslaved by sin; it has redeemed the whole of mankind.

And so do not be embarrassed by the Prince's cross; take pride in it instead. Although it is shocking to the Judeans and stupidity to the Gentiles, the message of the cross is our rescue. Of course it is stupidity to those who are dying out; but to those of us who are saved, it is the power of God. It was not simply a man who died for us; it was the Son of God: God become man.

In the Mosaic law, a sacrificial lamb drove out the destroyer. But now it is "the Lamb of God, the one who rids the world of its sin." Would he not free us even more from our sins? The blood of an animal, a sheep, brought rescue; then will not the blood of the only Son God ever fathered bring us greater rescue?

He was not killed against his will; he was not forced to give up his life. His sacrifice was voluntary. Listen to his own words: "I have the power to give up my life, and to take it back again." Yes, he voluntarily submitted to his own suffering; he found joy in its accomplishment; he was happy at his winner's crown and he took pleasure in man's rescue. He was not embarrassed by the cross, because he was to save the world by it. No, it was not an insignificant human being who suffered; it was God made flesh; he entered the match for the reward he would win by his perseverance.

So the cross should certainly give you joy in times of peace; but keep the same faith in times of oppression, because otherwise, you will be a friend of Jesus in times of tranquillity and his enemy during war. You are now receiving forgiveness of your sins and the generous gift of grace from your king; so when war comes, fight courageously for him.

Jesus never sinned, and yet he was crucified for you. Will you refuse to be crucified for him, the one who for your sake was nailed to the cross? You are not the one who gives the favor; you have received one first. It was for your sake that he was crucified on Golgotha; and now you are returning his favor; you are fulfilling your debt to him.

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

Our proclamation is a crucified Prince, which is shocking to the Judeans and stupidity to the Gentiles; but those of us on the way to being rescued see it as the proof of God's power.

#### Prayer

Dear Master, our God, please help us to love you with all our hearts and to love everyone as you love them. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



#### First Reading

#### 2 Thessalonians 2.1-17

But now, brothers and sisters, do not, please, let yourselves get excited or anxious about the time when our Master Prince Jesus is to join us and call us into his entourage—whether you hear that the Master's day has arrived either by an inspiration or gossip, or even by a letter that is supposedly from us. Do not be fooled by anyone in any way; it is not going to happen before the rebellion comes, when the Anarchist comes out into the open. He is the Son of Disaster, who is opposed to and who "sets himself above everything" called a "god" or sacred, so that he can "sit enthroned" in the temple "of God" and make himself out to be "God."

Have you forgotten that I told you this while I was there with you? And now you know what is holding him back until he shows himself at the right moment. Oh yes, the secret workings of anarchy have already started their dirty work; but the one who is keeping him in check has been with us up to now. But later the "Anarchist" will come out of hiding, and Master Jesus will "destroy him with the spirit, the breath from his mouth," and annihilate him with the radiance of his appearing among us.

But the appearing of the Anarchist is part of the activity of Satan, and will have all the power and signs and miracles falsehood is capable of, and will perform every trick that unholiness can devise for those who are to be destroyed because they did not accept the love of truth as what would save them. This is why God will send on them the act of being deluded, so they will believe the lie; and that is how the distinction will be made separating from us those who do not believe in the truth and who think that unholiness is what is right.

But we have to keep thanking God, brothers and sisters, for how you have been loved by the Master, because God has chosen you from the beginning for preservation in spiritual holiness and in belief in the truth. He called you to it by the report we brought of the good news, so that you could buy for yourselves the glory of our Master, Prince Jesus.

# PRIDAY

And so stand up tall, brothers and sisters, and keep hold of what has been handed to you, either by what we said by word of mouth or from our letter; and then our Master, Prince Jesus, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal encouragement and good hope as his gift, should strengthen your hearts and keep you firm in every good thing you do or say.

The sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and everyone on earth will see the Son of Man coming with great power and majesty.

Then the evil one will be revealed, and Master Jesus will kill him with the breath from his mouth. And everyone on earth will see the Son of Man coming with great power and majesty.

## Second Reading A Homily by a Spiritual Writer of the 4<sup>th</sup> Century

Those who have been chosen for the privilege of living as sons of God and being born again by the Holy Spirit from heaven, and who hold within them the Prince who makes them something new and fills them with light are directed by the Spirit in different ways, and in their spiritual rest they are invisibly led in their hearts by grace.

Sometimes they are like people mourning and keening over their fellow men, and as they pour out prayers for the whole human race, they drown themselves in tears and grief, since they are on fire with spiritual love for mankind. At other times, they are set ablaze by the Spirit with so much love and ecstasy that if it were possible, they would clasp in an embrace all mankind with no distinction, bad as well as good.

Sometimes, they are depressed below humanity in degradation of spirit, so that they consider themselves to be in the lowest and most desperate condition; and sometimes they are grasped by the Spirit into unspeakable joy.

At one moment, they are like a courageous man putting on all the King's armor and ready to rush into battle, fight fearlessly against the enemy and defeat it; in this sense, a spiritual man puts on the heavenly armor of the Spirit and marches against the enemy, engages him, and tramples him under his feet. At the next moment, the soul is at rest in the deepest of silence, tranquillity, and peace; simply being—in sheer spiritual pleasure and in indescribable rest and a perfect state of existence.

Now the soul is taught by grace a kind of understanding of the

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ineffable wisdom and inscrutable knowledge of the Spirit on matters which neither tongue nor lips can pronounce; now the soul becomes like any ordinary man.

Grace works within souls in varied ways such as these; it leads the soul by many different means, and renews it in accordance with God's will and trains it in different ways so that it will take its place before the heavenly Father as pure and intact and blameless.

And so we must also make our prayer to God and beg him in love and great hope to bestow upon us the heavenly grace of the gift of the Spirit. We should pray that we too will be guided by that Spirit and that he will lead us into the fullness of the divine will, and refresh us with the various kinds of rest, so that with the help of this guidance, this exercise of grace, and this spiritual advancement, we will be considered fit to attain the perfection of the fullness of the Prince, as the Emissary says: "That you will be filled with the complete fullness of the Prince."

You have been anointed by the Holy One, and this anointing you have received from him has stayed with you. You do not need anyone to teach you, because his anointing teaches you everything.

Be happy and enjoy life in the Master, your God, because he has given us a teacher to instruct us in holiness. You do not need anyone to teach you, because his anointing teaches you everything.

#### Prayer

Dear Master, our God, please help us to love you with all our hearts and to love everyone as you love them. We make this request through our Master Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



#### First Reading

2 Thessalonians 3.1-18

Finally, pray for us, brothers and sisters, so that the Master's message will spread as quickly and be as respected in other places as it was with you; and pray for us to be able to escape from people who will not listen

## SACURDAY

to reason and who are simply evil; not everyone has faith. Of course, the Master can be trusted, and he will strengthen you and protect you from harm. And we are certain in the Master that you are doing what we tell you, and will keep at it. May the Master direct your hearts to the love of God and the patience of the Prince.

But please, brothers and sisters, in the name of the Master Prince Jesus, stay away from any of the brothers who hangs around doing nothing, and does not accept what we have passed on to you. You know how you are supposed to imitate us: we were not idle while we were there with you, and we would not take our meals as a gift from anyone; we worked and sweated night and day so none of you would find us a burden. And this was not because we did not have the right to our food, but to set an example for you to follow. And while we were there, we told you that if a person did not want to work, he was not to be fed. We have heard that there are some people among you who are going around idle and not working—except for prying into others' business. This message is for them; we appeal to them in the Master Prince Jesus to find some work to earn their own food, and to keep themselves to themselves.

And the rest of you, brothers and sisters, should not grow tired of doing what is right. And if anyone will not listen to what we are saying in this letter, show him that he is wrong by having nothing to do with him until he is ashamed of himself. Do not treat him as if he were an enemy, of course; set him straight like the brother he is.

May the Master of peace bestow peace on you at all times and in every way.

The Master be with all of you.

This signature is in my handwriting: PAUL.

This will prove that any letter is from me, because this is my handwriting.

When you opened your hearts to the message of God, you didn't receive it as human talk, but for what it really is: what God is saying.

You have heard the utterance of the truth, the good news of your rescue. You didn't receive it as human talk, but for what it really is: what God is saying.

Second Reading

The Pastoral Constitution on the Church

in the Modern World by the Second Vatican Council

The activity of man, as it has its origin in man, has man also as its end. Man through his work not only introduces change into things and into society; he also perfects himself. He learns a great deal; he develops his powers; he advances above and beyond himself. This kind of gain, properly understood, is more valuable than any external possessions. Man's worth is greater because of what he is than of what he has.

In the same way, all that men do to secure greater justice, more widespread brotherhood and a more human structure of social relationships has more value than advance in technology. Technological development may provide the raw material for human progress, but of itself it is totally unable to bring it into being.

The criterion, therefore, for assessing man's activity is this: does it, in accordance with God's plan, fit in with the true good of the human race and allow man, individually and corporately, to develop and fulfill his vocation in its entirety?

Many of our contemporaries, however, seem to be afraid that a closer relationship between religion and man's activity will injure the autonomy of men or societies or the different sciences. If by the autonomy of earthly realities we mean that created things and even societies have their own distinctive laws and values, which must be gradually identified, used, and regulated by men, this kind of autonomy is rightly demanded. Not only is it insisted on by modern man, it is also in harmony with the design of the Creator. By the very fact of creation everything is provided with its own stability, its own truth and goodness, its own laws and orderly functioning. Man must respect these, acknowledging the methods proper to each science or art.

One should therefore deplore certain attitudes of mind which are sometimes found even among Christians because of a failure to recognize the legitimate autonomy of science. These mental attitudes have given rise to conflict and controversy and led many to assume that faith and science are mutually opposed.

If, on the other hand, the autonomy of the temporal order is understood to mean that created things do not depend on God, and that man may use them without reference to the Creator, all who believe in God will realize how false is this teaching. For creation without the Creator fades into nothingness.

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# SACURDAY

The Master has blessed you in everything you have done; he has watched over your progress as you journeyed through the vast desert. The Master, your God, has been with you; no need of yours has been forgotten.

In the same way as a father teaches his son, the Master, your God, was training you. The Master, your God, has been with you; no need of yours has been forgotten.

## Prayer

Dear Master, our God, please help us to love you with all our hearts and to love everyone as you love them. 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

## Galatians 1.1-12

Paul, an emissary—not an emissary of any human being or one authorized by any human being, but an emissary whose authorization is from Prince Jesus and God his Father, who brought him back from death and from all the brothers and sisters with me—to the communities of the people of Galatia:

Blessings and peace to you from God our Father and our Master Prince Jesus, who sacrificed himself for our sins so that he could rescue us from our present evil environment and fulfill the wishes of our God and Father; may people recognize his greatness for all the endless ages. Amen.

I am appalled at how quickly you turned away from the one who by God's gift called you, and started after a different report of the good news—not that there really is a different one, except that there are people there who want to cause trouble and distort the good news about the Prince.

But if even we—if an angel from heaven!—gives you a report that is different from the report we delivered to you, throw him out of your community! I've said it before, and I say it again; if anyone tells you a report different from the one that you received, throw him out!

Do I look at the effect what I say has on men, or on God? Am I trying to make people like me? If I cared about what people thought of me, I wouldn't be the Prince's slave. So I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the report of the good news that came from me was not something that came from a man; I didn't get it from any man or from being taught; I got it from a revelation by Prince Jesus.

## Sunday

God's blessings and peace from God our Father and our Master Prince Jesus, who gave himself up to death for our sins.

If I cared about what people thought of me, I would not be what I am: the slave of the Prince, who gave himself up to death for our sins.

#### Second Reading An Explanation of Galatians by St. Augustine

Paul writes to the Galatians to make them understand that by God's favor, they are no longer under the Law. When the Good News was reported to them, there were some of them known as circumcisers—though they called themselves Christians—who did not grasp the gift they had received. They still wanted to be under the burden of the Law.

But God had imposed that burden on people who were slaves to sin and not on servants of virtue; that is, God had given a just law to sinful men to show them their sin, not to remove it. The Galatians had already received this gift, but the circumcisers claimed that the Good News would not save them unless they underwent circumcision and were also willing to observe the other traditional Jewish rites.

And so the Galatians began to question Paul's reporting of the Good News, because he did not require Gentiles to follow Jewish observances as other Emissaries had done. Even the Rock had yielded to the shocked protests of the circumcisers; he pretended to believe that the Good News would not save the Gentiles unless they fulfilled the burden of the Law, but Paul called him back from this hypocrisy, as is shown in the very same letter. A similar issue arises in Paul's letter to the Romans, but with a clear difference: through his letter to them, Paul was able to resolve the conflict and dispute that had developed between the Jewish and Gentile converts.

In the present letter, Paul is writing to people who were profoundly influenced and disturbed by the circumcisers; the Galatians had begun to believe them, and to think that Paul's reporting was not accurate, since he had not ordered them to be circumcised. That is why the Emissary begins by saying, "I am appalled at how quickly you turned away from the one who by God's gift called you, and started after a different report of good news."

After this, there comes a brief introduction to the point at issue. But remember, in the very opening of the letter Paul had said that he was an Emissary, "not from human beings or authorized by any human being,"

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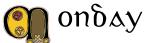
a statement that does not appear in any other letter of his. He is making it quite clear that the circumcisers are the ones who are from human beings and not God, and that his authority in reporting the Good News must be considered the equal of that of any of the other Emissaries—because he was called to be an Emissary "not from human beings or authorized by any human being," but through God the Father and his Son Prince Jesus.

The Law was our governess 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 authority of the governess any longer.

Before the time of faith came, the Law kept strict reins upon us, and watched us closely until the faith was disclosed. And now that the time of faith has come, we are not under the authority of the governess any longer.

## Prayer

Father, please watch over your family and keep us safe in your care, because all our hope is in 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

#### Galatians 1.13-2.10

You heard how I behaved when I was a believer in Judaism—how savagely I went after God's community and tried to destroy it, how I went deeper into Judaism than my own people of my own age, and was much more fanatical than they were in keeping the traditions of our ancestors.

But the one who set me apart from before I was born and who called me—not that I deserve it—thought it good to reveal his Son in me so that I could deliver the report about him to the Gentiles; and right away, without consulting any flesh-and-blood person, and without going to Jerusalem to meet the Prince's emissaries who were appointed earlier

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than I was, I left for Arabia, and then went back to Damascus.

It was three years later that I went to Jerusalem to get to know Cephas (Peter, the Rock); and I stayed with him two weeks, without seeing any other emissary except James, the Master's relative. This is no lie that I am writing to you—before God it is not. Then I went into the country around Syria and Cilicia. Still none of the Judean communities of the Prince knew me by sight; they had only heard tell that the one who used to harass them had started spreading the report that he was once trying to destroy—and they praised God because of me.

Then, fourteen years after that, I came to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with us—I came because of a revelation I had had—and reported privately to people everyone respected about the good news I was delivering to the Gentiles, in case the path I'm following—and was following then—led nowhere. And no one of them thought it necessary for Titus, who was with me, to be circumcised—and he was a Greek.

No, that idea came from some pseudo-brothers around them, who sneaked in to spy on the freedom we had in Jesus the Prince, and who were trying to make slaves of us; but we didn't let them have their way for one minute, because we wanted the freedom of the good news to be kept intact for you.

But the ones people respected—not that this ever made any difference to me, because God doesn't care about what is on the surface—but the fact is that these respectable people held no long discussions on the matter. Just the opposite; they saw that I was given the responsibility for the report to the uncircumcised, in the same way that the Rock was the one responsible for the circumcised; the one who made the Rock one of the Prince's emissaries to the circumcised made me an emissary to the Gentiles.

And when they recognized—these respected pillars, by the way, were James, Cephas, and John—the gift that had been given to me, they shook hands with me and Barnabas and made us partners; we were to go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. The only thing we were told was to keep the poor in mind—which was just what we had been careful to do.

It is by God's gift that I am what I am; and his gift to me has not been wasted.

It was the power of God that made the Rock an emissary to the Jewish people, and it was his power that made me an emissary to the Gentiles; and his gift to me has not been wasted.

## Second Reading A Short Discourse by St. Bonaventure

The source of Sacred Scripture was divine revelation, not human research; and this revelation comes "from the Father of light, from whom the whole concept of fatherhood in heaven and on earth derives." It is from him, through Prince Jesus his Son that the Holy Spirit enters us; and then, through the Holy Spirit, who allots and distributes his gifts to each person as he pleases, we receive the gift of faith, "and through faith the Prince lives in our hearts."

In this way, we come to know the Prince, and this knowledge becomes the main source of a firm understanding of the truth of all Sacred Scripture; and so it is impossible for anyone to achieve this understanding unless he first receives the gift of faith in the Prince, which is the foundation of the whole Bible, a lamp and key to its understanding. As long as our earthly condition keeps us from seeing the Master, this same faith is the firm foundation of all supernatural enlightenment, the light guiding us to it, and the doorway through which we enter it. In addition, the extent of our faith is the criterion for the wisdom which God has given us. Thus, "no one should overestimate his wisdom; he should make his assessment in accordance with the extent of the faith God has given him."

The outcome or the harvest of reading the Holy Scripture is by no means insignificant; it is the totality of eternal happiness; and the reason is that these are the books which tell us of eternal life, and were written not only for us to believe but to actually have everlasting life. When we do live that life, we will have complete understanding, we will have total love, and all our desires will be fully satisfied. Then, with all our needs fulfilled, we will really know "the love that surpasses understanding," and so "be filled with the totality of God." The purpose of the Scriptures, which come to us from God, is to lead us to this totality following the truths contained in those sayings of the Emissaries I have referred to; and to achieve this, we must study Holy Scripture carefully, and teach it and listen to it in the same way.

If we are to attain the ultimate goal of eternal happiness by the path

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of virtue described in the Scriptures, we have to begin at the very beginning. We must come with a pure faith to the Father of Light and acknowledge him in our hearts; we must ask him to give us, through his Son and in the Holy Spirit, a true knowledge of Prince Jesus, and along with that knowledge a love of him. Knowing and loving him in this way, confirmed in our faith and grounded in our love, we can know "the length, width, height, and depth" of his Sacred Scripture. Through that knowledge, we can finally come to know perfectly and love completely the Blessed Trinity, whom the saints desire to know and love, and in whom all that is good and true finds its meaning and fulfillment.

Beginning with Moses, and going through all the prophets, Jesus showed them the meaning of those passages of Scripture which had been written about him.

How foolish you are and slow to believe all that the prophets have said! Jesus showed them the meaning of those passages of Scripture which had been written about him.

## Prayer

Father, please watch over your family and keep us safe in your care, because all our hope is in 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

## Galatians 2.11-3.14

And in fact, when Cephas came to Antioch, I stood up to him and told him to his face that he should be ashamed of himself. He used to eat his meals with Gentiles, until some people came from James; and when they arrived, he stayed away and avoided them, because he was afraid of what the circumcised people would think. And the other Judeans were as dishonest as he was; and even Barnabas got infected with the hypocrisy.

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Well, when I saw that they were not behaving consistently with the truth that was reported in the good news, I said to Cephas, "If you're a Judean and you do what the Gentiles do and don't live like a Judean, why do you insist on Judaizing the Gentiles? We—who were born Judeans and not sinners the way the Gentiles are—know that doing what the Law commands doesn't make anyone virtuous; a person only gets that way by belief in Jesus as the Prince; and so we have put our faith in Jesus as Prince, so that we'll become virtuous because of our faith in the Prince and not because of the law—because 'no material thing becomes virtuous' by doing what the Law commands."

Now if trying to be virtuous in the Prince makes us sinners against the Law, does this mean that the Prince is an accomplice of sin? Of course not! But if I started rebuilding what I tore down, *then* I'd be a sinner! So I've died by the law—and died *to* the law—so that I can live for God. I have been crucified—for the Prince; and I am not the one who is alive any more; the Prince is living in me. The life I now live in my body is a life I live in belief in the Son of God, who loved me and sacrificed himself for me. I'm not going to throw away God's gift; if virtue can be got through the law, then the Prince died for nothing!

You aren't thinking, brothers and sisters in Galatia! Has someone cast a spell over you? You had the picture drawn before your very eyes of Prince Jesus on the cross. Let me just ask you this one thing: Did you receive the Spirit from doing what the Law says, or from belief in what you heard? Have you no heads? You started spiritually; are you going to end up materialists now? Is everything that happened to you for nothing?

If you keep on this way, it is for nothing! And so the one who condescended to bestow the Spirit on you and who performed deeds of power among you did it because of what you did in obeying the law. Didn't he? Or did he do it because of your belief in what you heard? After all, even Abraham "believed in God, and this was evidence that he was a virtuous man."

So I want you to know that those who base their lives on belief are the ones who are descendants of Abraham. And Scripture foresaw that the Gentiles would become virtuous because of their belief when God gave this prophesy of good news to Abraham: "All the nations—the Gentiles—will find approval in you." So those who live from their belief win approval with the belief of Abraham.

## Cuesday

But people who base their lives on doing what the Law says are under a curse; Scripture says, "Every person who does not keep doing everything that is written in the book of the Law is under a curse." And that no one in fact becomes virtuous by doing what the Law says is clear from this: "A virtuous person finds life from his belief." But the Law does not come from belief; it says, "The one who does what these commands say will find life in them."

The Prince bought freedom for us from the Law's curse when he became accursed himself for us; Scripture says, "Everyone who is hanged is accursed"; and that allowed the blessing of Abraham in Prince Jesus to fall on the Gentiles, so that we could receive—through our belief—the Spirit that was promised.

A man does not become virtuous by doing what the Law commands, but through faith in Prince Jesus. We have believed in Jesus the Prince so that we would become holy by faith in him, and not through the observance of the Law.

If holiness comes through keeping the law, then the Prince is of no use. We have believed in Jesus the Prince so that we would become holy by faith in him, and not through the observance of the Law.

#### Second reading

#### A Homily on Genesis, by Origen

"Abraham took wood for the sacrifice and placed it upon his son Isaac, and he took fire and a sword in his hands, and they set out together." Isaac carries the wood for his own holocaust himself; this is a symbol of the Prince, because he took up the burden of the cross; and yet to carry the wood for the holocaust is really the duty of the priest. And so he is both victim and priest; and this is the meaning of the clause, "they set out together." That is, when Abraham, who was to perform the sacrifice, carried the fire and the knife, Isaac did not walk behind him; he was with him. In this way, he showed that he exercised the priesthood equally with Abraham.

What happens after this? "Isaac said to his father Abraham, 'Father.'" This plea from the son was at that instant the voice of temptation, because do you not think that the voice of the son who was about to be sacrificed struck a responsive chord in the heart of the father? Though Abraham did not waver because of his faith, he answered with a voice full of affection, and asked, "What is it, my son?" Isaac answered, "Here are the fire and the wood, but where is the sheep for the holocaust?" And Abraham replied, "God will provide a sheep for the holocaust himself, my son."

The careful and yet loving answer of Abraham moves me a great deal. I do not know what he saw in his spirit, because he was speaking of the future, not the present: "God will provide a sheep himself." His answer deals with the future, and yet his son is asking about the present. And, in fact, the Master himself did provide a sheep for himself in the Prince.

"Abraham reached out his hand to take the sword and slaughter his son, and the Master's angel called him from heaven and said, 'Abraham! Abraham!' And he answered, 'I am here.' And the angel said, 'Do not lay your hand on the boy or do anything to him, because I now know that you have reverence for God.'" Compare those words to those of the Emissary when he speaks of God: "He did not spare his own Son, and gave him up for us all." God outdoes man in magnificent generosity; Abraham offered to God his mortal son, who did not die, and God gave up his immortal Son, who did die—for all of us.

"And as Abraham looked around, he saw a ram caught by the horns on a bush." We said before that Isaac is a forerunner of the Prince; yet this also seems true of the ram. To understand how both symbols of the Prince—Isaac, who was not slaughtered, and the ram which was—is well worth investigating.

The Prince is the Word of God, but "the Word became flesh." And so the Prince suffered and died, but materially, in his flesh. In this respect, the ram is the forerunner, just as John said, "That man is God's lamb, the one who has rid the world of its sin." The Word, however, remained incorruptible; and this is the Prince in his spiritual aspect, and here Isaac is the forerunner. And so the Prince is himself both victim and priest in the spiritual dimension; because he offers the victim to the Father in his material aspect, and is himself offered on the altar of the cross.

They took Jesus into custody and led him away, and carrying his own cross, he went to the place called "the Skull."

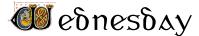
Abraham took the wood for the sacrifice and put in on the shoulders of his son Isaac, and carrying his own cross he went to the place called

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"the Skull."

#### Prayer

Father, please watch over your family and keep us safe in your care, because all our hope is in 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

## Galatians 3.15-4.7

Speaking in purely legal terms, brothers and sisters, no second party can revoke or add any codicil to a document that has been executed properly. And the promises that were given to Abraham were given to him "and to his descendant." Not to "his descendants," plural, but in the singular, "to your descendant," or in other words, to the Prince. So I can say this: A treaty that was duly executed by God is not revoked by a law made four hundred thirty years later, so that its promise is nullified. And if the inheritance came from the law, it would no longer be from the promise; but the gift was given to Abraham by a promise.

Then what was the law for? It was issued to take care of violations of the Treaty on our part until the arrival of the "descendant" who was the recipient of the promise; and it was promulgated by angels, or by the hand of an intermediary. But there's no intermediary when the agent acts for himself; and God is an agent acting for himself.

Anyhow, is the Law in contradiction with the promises? Of course not. If there were such a thing as a law which, once issued, would bestow life, then virtue might possibly be found from the law; but Scripture locked everything up in sin, so that the promise would be given because of belief in Prince Jesus to those who have faith in him.

Before belief came we were kept locked up in legal custody until the future belief would be disclosed. The Law was a kind of governess or school-master seeing to our upbringing toward the Prince, so that we could become virtuous by belief; and now that the belief has come, we aren't under the control of the governess any more.

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You are all children of God because of the belief in Jesus as the Prince. Those of you who were bathed in the Prince have put on the livery of the Prince; there's no such thing as Judean or Greek, or anything like slave or freeman, or male or female; you're all one person in Jesus the Prince; and if you are all part of the Prince, *you* are the "descendant" of Abraham, and so heirs by the promise.

Let me also say this: as long as an heir is a minor, he's no different from a slave, even if he is actually the owner of the whole estate; he has to obey the guardians and trustees until the date named by his father. And that is how we are; when we were minors, we were enslaved by the things that make up the heavenly universe; and then when the time of bondage was up, God sent his Son, born to a woman, and born under the Law, to ransom us from the Law so that we could be adopted as sons and daughters. And to prove that you are sons and daughters, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, where he cries, "Abba!" ("Dad!")

So you're not a slave any more; you are a son; and if you're a son, you are by God's act an heir.

All of you who have been bathed in the Prince have put on the Prince's livery; and now there is neither Judean nor Greek; you are all one thing in Prince Jesus.

You must put on the new man created in the image of God, in true virtue and holiness. You are all one thing in Prince Jesus.

#### Second Reading

## A Letter by St. Ambrose

The person who by the Spirit kills the deeds of our sinful nature will live, says the Emissary. This is not surprising, since a person who has the Spirit of God becomes a child of God—and he is really a child of God because he receives the Spirit that makes us sons, not a spirit that enslaves us. And this is so true that the Holy Spirit testifies to our own spirit that we are sons of God; and here is the testimony of the Holy Spirit: he calls out in our own hearts, "Abba! 'Dad,'" as we read in the letter to the Galatians.

There is also that other great evidence to the fact that we are children of God: "We are heirs of God, and coheirs with the Prince." A coheir is someone who is glorified along with the Prince, and one who is glorified along with him is a person who, in suffering for him, suffers along with

## **Galatians 4**

him.

To encourage us in suffering, Paul adds that all our sufferings are insignificant in comparison with the wonderful reward that will be revealed in us; our labors do not really earn us the blessings that are ahead of us. We will be restored to the image of God, and considered fit to see him face to face.

He enhances the greatness of the revelation that is coming by adding that creation also looks forward to this revealing of God's children. Creation, he says, is now condemned to frustration, not because of something it committed; but it lives in hope—and its hope is in the Prince, as it waits for the grace of his service; or it hopes that it will share in the glorious freedom of God's children and will be freed from its bondage to decay, so that there will be one freedom, shared by creation and God's children when their glory is revealed.

At the moment, however, while this revealing is delayed, all creation suffers as it looks forward to the glory of adoption and redemption; it is already in labor with that spirit of rescue, and anxious to be freed from its subjection to frustration.

The meaning is clear: those who have the firstfruits of the Spirit are suffering in expectation of their adoption as children. This adoption as children is the adoption of the whole body of creation, when it will be a Son of God, so to speak, and see the divine, eternal goodness face to face. The adoption as children is present in the Master's Church when the Spirit calls, "Abba; Dad," as you read in the letter to the Galatians; but it will be perfect when everyone who is fit to see God's face will return to life incorruptible, and with honor and glory. Then our humanity will know that it really has been redeemed. So Paul is proud to say, "We are saved by hope." Hope saves in the same way faith does; because it is said of faith, "Your faith has saved you."

We are God's heirs and coheirs with the Prince, if we just suffer with him so that we will also be glorified with him.

Now that we have been made virtuous in his blood, it is all the more likely that he will save us from God's anger, if we just suffer with him so that we will also be glorified with him.

#### Prayer

Father, please watch over your family and keep us safe in your care, because all our hope is in 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

#### Galatians 4.8-31

But before you knew about God, you were slaves to things which really weren't gods at all. But now that you recognize God—or rather, now that you're recognized by God—why are you turning back to these poor feeble components of the universe, and wanting to enslave yourselves to them all over again? You're starting to observe special days and months and seasons and years. I'm beginning to be afraid that all the trouble I took over you is being wasted.

Please, brothers and sisters, be like me; I became like you. Not that you've done *me* any harm; you know that it was because I wasn't well that I came to you with the Report the first time, and in spite of the nuisance my condition was, you didn't despise me or sneer at me because of it; you accepted me as if I were one of God's angels, or Jesus the Prince. Where did this happiness come from? I can tell you that if you could, you would have torn out your eyes and given them to me. And are you going to hate me now for telling you the truth?

There are people there who are working hard on you, and not for your good; they're trying to tie you up and get you working on their side. Now it's a good thing to work hard, but in the right way; and to be working hard all the time, not just when I'm there with you, you little infants of mine—you give me labor pains all over again until the Prince takes shape in you.

I wish I could be with you now, and then I might be able to change my tone; I don't know what to do with you!

Tell me, if you're so anxious to be under the law, why don't you listen to the law? It's written there that Abraham had two sons, one from a slave and one from a free woman. The one born from the slave was born materially; the one born from the free woman was the one that

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came from the promise.

Now this is an allegory; the two women stand for the two treaties, one of which was ratified on Mount Sinai, and raised children to slavery. This is Hagar. Hagar's mountain Sinai is in Arabia, and it corresponds to the present Jerusalem, which is enslaved and so are its children.

The Jerusalem above is the free woman, and she is our mother. This is what Scripture says: "Be happy, sterile soul without a son; Laugh and shout, woman never in labor; There are more children for the deserted wife than for the one who has the man." And you, brothers and sisters, are the Isaac, the children of the promise. And in those days the child born materially harassed the one born from the spirit; and it's happening again now.

But what does Scripture say? "Get rid of the slave and her child; the slave's child is not to be an heir with the son" of the free woman. So we are the free woman's children, brothers and sisters, not the slave's.

We are like Isaac, children born from the promise, children born from the free woman, not the slave. The Prince has set us free for us to be free.

The Master is the Spirit, and there is freedom where the Master's Spirit is. The Prince has set us free for us to be free.

## Second Reading An Explanation of Galatians by St. Augustine

The Emissary says, "Be like me," because, even though I was born a Judean, from my spiritual insight I now consider material things not to be important. And he adds, "I became like you," or in other words, "I am a man like you." Then he tactfully reminds them of his love, so they will not look on him as an enemy. "Brothers and sisters, I beg you," he says, "not that you did me any harm," as if to say, "Don't imagine I want to harm you." And to have them imitate him as if he were their parent, he addresses them as little children, "My little infants; I have labor pains all over again until the Prince takes shape in you." Actually, he is speaking here more in the person of Mother Church than in his own. And in the same way, he says somewhere else, "I was as gentle among you as a nurse caring for her infants."

The Prince takes shape in a believer by the faith of his inner human being, which is called to the freedom that grace bestows, and is meek and gentle, and does not take pride in nonexistent "merits" but makes

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some beginning of deserving something through grace. And so he can be called "my most insignificant one" by the one who said, "Insofar as you did it to the most insignificant of my brothers, you did it to me."

The Prince takes shape in the one who receives the Prince's mold, and clings to him with spiritual love. By imitating him he becomes, as far as it possible in his condition, what the Prince is. John says, "A person who makes his home in the Prince should conduct himself as he did."

Children are conceived in order to take shape in their mother's womb; and when they have been formed in this way, mothers go into labor to give them birth. And so we can understand Paul's words, "You give me labor pains until the Prince takes shape in you." By "labor" we are to understand his anxiety for those for whom he is in labor, so that they will be born to the Prince. And he is in labor all over again when he sees them in danger of being led astray. These anxieties, which can be compared to labor pains, will continue until they "come to full maturity in the Prince, so that they won't be blown about by every wind of teaching."

And so he is not talking about the beginnings of faith when they were born, but of strong and perfect faith, when he says, "I am in labor all over again until the Prince takes shape in you." He also refers elsewhere in different words to his being in labor, when he says, "There is the daily pressure upon me of my anxiety for all the communities. Is there anyone weak and I am not weak? Is there anyone who falls and I am not enraged?"

Let us tell the truth in love, so that we will grow in every way into the Prince, who is our head.

The path of virtuous people is like the passage of dawn; it grows from first light to the full splendor of day, so that we will grow in every way into the Prince, who is our head.

#### Prayer

Father, please watch over your family and keep us in your care, because all our hope is in 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. PRIDAY

# Friday

#### First Reading

#### Galatians 5.1-25

The Prince set us free for us to be free; and so be firm and don't let them put the saddle of slavery on your backs again.

And I, Paul, am telling you that if you get circumcised, the Prince is no use to you. And I know what I am talking about, and so I repeat that every man who is circumcised has the obligation to do everything the Law commands. Those of you who are trying to be virtuous by the Law have done away with the Prince; you've fallen out of range of the gift. To us, the hope of virtue is something we get from the Spirit by our belief; in Jesus the Prince circumcision has no force, and neither does having a foreskin; the only thing that matters is faith that acts through love.

You used to be running a good race. What kept you from recognizing the truth? Whatever convinced you, it wasn't something that came from the one who called you. A little yeast makes all the dough rise.

—Now I'm confident in the Master that you won't keep holding this wrong opinion; the one who is facing punishment is the one who has been pestering you, whoever he is. Look at me; if my proclamation includes circumcision, why am I still being hounded? No, that would do away with the obstacle that is the cross. I only wish that the people causing trouble there would have the whole thing cut off, not just the foreskin!

Because you were called to be free, brothers and sisters!—only don't turn your freedom into an excuse for indulging your flesh; use it to serve each other in love. The whole Law is summed up in one sentence: "You are to love your neighbor as if he were yourself." But if you keep snapping and biting at each other, be careful or you'll all destroy each other.

Let me also say that if you're behaving spiritually, then you're not satisfying the urges your matter has. Matter has urges that contradict spirit, and the spirit has urges that contradict matter. They are opposed to each other, so that you don't do what you choose to do.

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But if you act spiritually, you aren't subject to a law. It's obvious what materialistic acts are: premarital sex, masturbation, homosexual acts, idolatry, magic, hatred, picking fights, working against others, anger, putting others down, forming cliques, excluding people, jealousy, drunkenness, orgies, and so on. I warn you, as I warned you before, that people who do things like this are not heirs of God's kingdom.

But the Spirit's harvest is love, happiness, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, modesty, and self-control; there's no law against things like this. The Prince's people have nailed matter to a cross, with its desires and urges. If we live spiritually, then we have to behave spiritually.

If you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. The signs of the Spirit's presence are love, happiness, and peace.

Since we live by the Spirit, let him direct our lives. The signs of the Spirit's presence are love, happiness, and peace.

#### Second Reading

## A Sermon by St. Leo the Great

Our Master Prince Jesus, who was born true man without ever ceasing to be true God, began in his person a new creation and by the manner of his birth gave man a spiritual origin. Is there a mind that can grasp this mystery or a tongue that can tell properly of this gift of love? Guilt becomes innocence, what is old becomes new, aliens are adopted, and outsiders are made heirs. Wake up, man, and recognize the dignity of your nature; remember that you were made in God's image, and, though it was corrupted in Adam, that image has been restored in the Prince.

Use creatures as they should be used: the earth, the sea, the sky, the air, and the streams and rivers. Give praise and glory to their Creator for all that you find beautiful and wonderful in them. See with your bodily eyes the light that shines on earth, but embrace with your whole soul and all your affections "the true light which comes into the world and shines on every human being." The prophet said, in speaking of this light, "Draw close to him and let his light shine on you; and your face will not blush with shame." If we are really the Temple of God, and if the Spirit of God lives in us, then what every believer has within himself is greater than what he admires in the skies.

## SACURDAY

Our words and preaching are not intended to make you despise God's works or think that there is anything against your faith in creation, because a good God has made everything good. What we do ask is for you to use all the marvelous creatures which adorn this world with reason and moderation; as the Emissary says, "What is seen is transient, but what is unseen is eternal."

That is, we are born in the present age only to be reborn in the future; and so our attachment should not be for what is transitory, and should fix itself on what is eternal. Let us think of how divine grace has transformed our earthly natures so that we can contemplate our heavenly hope more closely. We hear the Emissary say, "You are dead and your life is hidden with the Prince in God; but when the Prince, who is your life, comes out of concealment, you will also appear with him in glory," as he lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit for all the ages of ages. Amen.

I will sing you a new song, my God; I will sing to you and play on the ten-stringed lyre.

You are my God, and I praise you; I thank you, my God. I will sing to you and play on the ten-stringed lyre.

#### Prayer

Father, please watch over your family and keep us safe in your care, because all our hope is in 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

#### Galatians 5.25-6.18

If we live spiritually, then we have to behave spiritually; we should stop looking for an empty reputation and challenging each other and competing with each other.

Also, brothers and sisters, if a person is caught doing something wrong, those of you who live spiritually should try to set him straight,

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but with an attitude of tolerance, keeping in mind how you yourself are, in case you get tempted. Help each other to carry burdens; this is the way you will fulfill the Prince's law.

Because, remember, if a person thinks he is something, when in fact he is nothing, he's fooling himself.

But each of you is to be the judge only of his own conduct; and you're to do it by comparing yourself with yourself and not someone else; each person has a responsibility that belongs to him alone.

A person who is learning about the message should share some of what he has with the one who is teaching him.

Don't be misled; no one makes a fool of God; a person harvests what he has planted. So if your body is the ground you plant in, you'll reap decay from the body; and if you plant in what is spirit, you'll harvest from the Spirit eternal life. So we mustn't grow tired of doing good; if we don't lie down at the work, we'll reap our harvest when the time is right. And so whenever we find the occasion, we should do good to everyone, especially to the members of the family of faith.

Notice these big letters I'm putting down in my own handwriting.

It's people who just want to make a good impression—a material one—who are the ones who are trying to force you to be circumcised; all they care about is to avoid having anyone get after them because of the Prince's cross. And those circumcised people don't even keep the law; they just want you to be circumcised so they can brag about what they've done to your bodies.

But as far as I am concerned, I hope I never have anything to brag about except the cross of our Master Prince Jesus, who has crucified the world from my point of view, and crucified me from the world's. Circumcision makes no difference, and neither does having a foreskin; the only thing that matters is a new creation.

May those of you who base your conduct on this rule have peace and mercy come upon you, and upon God's Israel.

From now on, no one is to make trouble for me; I wear Jesus' wounds in my body.

Blessings from our Master Prince Jesus on your spirits, brothers and sisters. Amen.

A man can only reap what he has planted; so if you plant in the field of

### SACURDAY

selfishness, it will bring you a harvest of death and decay; if you plant in the field of the Spirit, you will reap the harvest of eternal life.

It is the Spirit that gives life; matter is no use at all. If you plant in the field of the Spirit, you will reap the harvest of eternal life.

#### Second Reading

#### A Sermon by Bl. Isaac of Stella

Why, brothers and sisters, do we have so little interest in looking out for someone else's benefit, so that, when we see that there is a greater need, we will be more ready to help carry each other's burdens? Because this is what the blessed Emissary Paul encourages us to do with the words, "Carry each other's burdens, and fulfill the Prince's law in doing so;" and "Give each other support in love." This obviously is the Prince's law.

Why can't I bear patiently the weaknesses I see in my brother or sister which, either out of necessity or because of some physical or moral weakness, can't be corrected? And why is it that I can't generously offer him sympathy instead, as it is written, "The children will be carried on their shoulders and comforted on their knees." Is it because I do not have the virtue which "puts up with everything," is patient enough to bear it all, and generous enough to love?

This is in fact the law of the Prince, who in fact "carried our weaknesses" in his suffering and "bore our suffering" out of pity, because he loved those he carried and carried those he loved. Anyone who attacks a brother in need or plots against him in his weakness, whatever it is, is actually fulfilling the devil's law and is subject to it. And so let us be sympathetic toward each other and love all our brothers and sisters, put up with each other's weaknesses, and yet rid ourselves of our own sins.

The more any way of life makes a sincere effort toward the love of God and the love of our neighbor for God's sake, the more acceptable it is to God, no matter what its observance or external form is. That is, love is the reason why anything should be done or left undone, or changed or left unchanged; it is the primary source and the end toward which everything should be directed. Whatever is honestly done out of love and in accordance with love cannot be culpable; and so may God condescend to bestow on us this love, because we cannot please him without it, and without him we can do absolutely nothing—and he is the one who is alive and reigning through all the ages of ages. Amen.

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This is the message you heard from the beginning: love each other. All God's commands are summed up in this one: love each other.

### Prayer

Father, please watch over your family and keep us safe in your care, because all our hope is in 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

Proverbs 1.1-7, 20-33

Proverbs of Solomon, son of David, king of Israel. This is so that people will know wisdom and instruction, understand words full of good sense, receive training in wise conduct, virtue, discernment, and justice; it is to give good judgment to simple souls, and knowledge and discretion to the young. A wise man listens and grows in learning, and an intelligent man looks for wise advice in understanding proverbs and enigmas, what wise men say, and the riddles they pose. It is reverence for YHWH that is the beginning of knowledge; but fools sneer at wisdom and education. Wisdom cries out in the street and calls in the open plazas; it shouts at the main crossroads and sends its message as the city gates open: "How long are you going to love what does not exist, you fools? Sneerers take their pleasure in scoffing and fools hate knowledge. Turn back at my warning, and I will be sure to pour my spirit on you; I will make you informed of what I say. Because I called and you refused to listen;

I reached out my hand, and no one paid attention,

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because you all despised my advice, and ignored my warning. Then I will laugh at your downfall, I will make fun of you in your terror when your doom comes like a storm and your devastation falls on you like a tornado and catastrophe and agony come upon you. The fools will call to me then, but I will not answer; they will search everywhere for me, but will not find me, because they hated knowledge and did not choose to respect YHWH; they would have nothing to do with my good advice and despised all the warnings I gave. And that is why they will eat the fruit they have raised and glut themselves with their own pipe-dreams; it is the self-will of simpletons that kills them and fools' complacency is their ruin; but anyone who listens to me will be safe in his home and have no fear of harm."

Never allow yourself to be self-satisfied; if you pride yourself on your wisdom, you will have to unlearn it before you are really wise; the world's wisdom is stupidity in the eyes of God.

Our proclamation deals with the Prince as crucified, and he is the power of God and the wisdom of God; the world's wisdom is stupidity in the eyes of God.

#### Second Reading A Commentary on the Diatessaron by St. Ephrem

Master, who can fully understand even one of your words? We lose more than we grasp, like those who drink from a running spring. The reason is that the word God utters has different facets depending on the capacity of the listener, and the Master has portrayed his message in many colors, so that whoever gazes on it can see in it what suits him. He has buried many different sorts of riches within it, so that each of us will grow wealthy as we search them out.

The words God utters are a tree of life that offers us blessed fruit from each of its branches; it is like that rock which was struck open in the

### Sunday

desert, from which everyone was offered spiritual drink. As the Emissary says, "They ate spiritual food and drank spiritual drink."

And so whenever someone discovers some part of the treasure, he should not think that he has exhausted what God has said; he should feel that this is all of the wealth contained in it that he was able to find. And he should not say that the utterance is weak and sterile, or look down on it simply because this aspect of it was all that he happened to find; and precisely because he could not capture it all, he should be grateful for its riches.

Be glad, then, that you are overwhelmed, and do not be disheartened because he has overcome you. A thirsty man is happy when he is drinking and is not depressed because he has not drunk the spring dry. Let this spring quench your thirst, and not your thirst the spring; because if you can satisfy your thirst without exhausting the spring, then when you are thirsty again, you can drink from it once more; but if the spring is also dry when your thirst is satisfied, then your victory would be your own damage.

And so be thankful for what you have received, and do not be discouraged at all that such an abundance is still there. What you have received and attained is your present share, and what is left will be your heritage; because you will be able to grasp at another time what you could not take at one time because of your weakness, if only you persevere. So do not try foolishly to drain in one swallow what cannot be consumed all at once, and do not give up out of faintheartedness and miss what you will be able to absorb as time goes on.

The utterance of the Master lasts forever; and this same utterance, the Good News, has been reported to you.

This is the book of the commandments of God, the law that stands for ever; and everyone who keeps it will live. This same utterance, the Good News, has been reported to you.

#### Prayer

Dear God, our Father, since you have promised to remain forever with those who do what is virtuous and moral, please help us live in your presence. 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

Proverbs 3.1-20

My son, do not forget my law, and see that your heart keeps my commands; they will add to your years and give you long life and will bring you peace. Do not let kindness and faithfulness leave you; tie them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart, and in this way you will find honor and a good reputation before God and other men. Trust YHWH with your whole heart, and do not rely on your own intelligence; in everything you do, acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; respect YHWH and turn away from evil, and this will make your body healthy and your bones strong. Do honor to YHWH with your possessions and with the firstfruits of everything you produce so that your barns will fill up with grain and your vats will overflow with your new wine. My son, do not resent YHWH's punishments or hate his corrections, because YHWH corrects those he loves just as a father does when his son delights him. It is a blessing for a man to find wisdom and for a man to attain to understanding, because its rewards are better than the return on silver and it makes more profit than fine gold; it is more precious than rubies

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### Φοηδλγ

and anything you desire cannot be compared with it.

It has long life in its right hand,

and in its left, riches and honor;

its ways are pleasant paths,

and all its roads are peaceful.

It is like a tree of life to those that grasp it,

and it is a blessing for everyone who keeps it.

It is by wisdom that YHWH set up the earth, and he laid out the heavens with intelligence;

their depths break open by his knowledge

and clouds come and drop the dew.

Do not resent the Master's punishments, and do not hate his corrections, because it is the ones he loves that the Master corrects, just as a father punishes a favorite son.

God is treating you like his sons; is there ever a son that his father does not punish? Because it is the ones he loves that the Master corrects, just as a father punishes a favorite son.

#### Second Reading

### A Sermon by St. Bernard

Let us work for the food which does not spoil: our rescue. Let us work in the Master's vineyard to earn our daily wage in the wisdom which says, "Those who work in me will not sin." The Prince tells us, "The field is the world." Let us work in it and dig up wisdom, its buried treasure, a treasure we are all looking for and want to acquire.

"If you are looking for it, really search. Turn around and come." Turn around from what? "From your own willfulness." "But," you may say, "if I do not find wisdom in my own will, where will I find it? My soul wants it desperately; and I will not be satisfied when I find it if it is not 'a generous amount, a full measuring-pail, overflowing into my hands." You are right, because "it is a blessing for a man to find wisdom and to be full of good judgment."

Look for wisdom while it can still be found. Call for it while it is near. Do you want to know how near it is? "The words you are looking for are in your heart and on your lips," provided that you make an honest search. To the extent that you find wisdom in your heart, good judgment will flow from your lips; but be careful that it flows from them

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but not *away* from them, or that you do not throw it up.

If you have found wisdom, you have found honey. But do not eat so much that you become too full and bring it all up. Eat so that you are always hungry. Wisdom says, "Those who eat me continue to feel hunger." Do not think you have too much of it, but do not eat too much or you will throw it up. If you do, what you seem to have eaten will be taken away from you, because you gave up searching too soon. While wisdom is near and while it can be found, search for it and ask for its help. Solomon says, "A man who eats too much honey does himself no good; and a man who looks for fame for himself will be crushed by that same renown."

"It is a blessing for a man to find wisdom." It is even more of a blessing to be a "man who lives in wisdom," because he is aware of its abundance. There are three ways for wisdom or good judgment to be plentiful in you: if you admit your sins, if you show gratitude and praise, and if your speech is constructive. "A man who believes with his heart and soul is virtuous; he acknowledges reality with his lips, and so is saved. "At the outset of his speaking, the virtuous man is his own accuser;" next he praises God, and thirdly, if his wisdom extends that far, he benefits his neighbor.

I have loved wisdom more than health or beauty, and I preferred it to the light of day; everything good came to me along with it.

From my youth, I have loved wisdom and searched for it, and I came to love its beauty; everything good came to me along with it.

#### Prayer

Dear God, our Father, since you have promised to remain forever with those who do what is virtuous and moral, please help us to live in your presence. 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 Proverbs 8.1-5, 12-36 Is wisdom not calling and understanding making itself heard? It is standing there on the top of the high hill and at the crossroads, coming out of the gates that give entry to the city and at the doors of houses: "I am calling to you human beings, and my voice is to be heard by mortal men! You naive fools, learn common sense! You half-wits, find an understanding heart! I, wisdom, share my home with good judgment and discover knowledge and prudence. Respect for YHWH is to hate evil; and I hate pride, arrogance, and immoral conduct as well as perverse speech. I give good advice, and healthy guidance; I am intelligence, and strength belongs to me. Kings use me to rule, and rulers make their decisions by me; heads of state and nobles rule by me, and all the judges through the earth. I love those who love me, and those who make a serious search for me will find me. Riches and honor come with me: lasting riches, and virtue. My yield is better than gold, even refined gold, and my profit is greater than silver. I walk along the path of virtue among the roads of morality, so that I will grant wealth to those who love me and fill their treasure-chests. I belonged to YHWH at the beginning of his actions, before any of his ancient works were made;

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I was created from eternity, from the beginning, before there ever was an earth; when there was no chaos, I emerged, when there were no springs full of water, before the mountains were set in place, and before the hills, I came to be; while he had not yet made the earth or its fields, or even the primal dust of the universe. I was there when he readied the heavens, when he drew a circle on the face of the depths, when he placed the clouds up in it and made the solid dome for the heavenly water, when he assigned the limit for the sea so that its water would not violate his command, when he laid the foundations of the earth, I was beside him as his engineer, and I was his delight every day, playing beside him at every moment, taking pleasure in the living world and finding joy in mortal men. And so now, listen to me, my children, because it is your blessing to keep my ways; pay attention to my teaching, and be wise, and do not sneer at it. It is a blessing for a man to listen to me watching for me every day at my gates, waiting at the threshold of my doors, because anyone who finds me, finds life and gains favor with YHWH; but whoever sins against me harms his own soul, and those who hate me love death."

In the beginning, before he made the earth, the Master created me. In the beginning, there was the Word, and the Word was face to face with God, and the Word was God. The Master created me.

### Cuesday

### Second reading Discourses against the Arians by St. Athanasius The only Son God ever fathered, the Wisdom of God, created the entire universe. Scripture says, "You have made everything by your wisdom, and the earth is full of your creatures." But it was not enough simply to be; God wanted his creatures also to be good; and that is why he was pleased that his own wisdom would come down to their level and impress on each of them singly and all together a kind of resemblance to their Model. It would then be obvious that God's creatures shared in his wisdom and that his works were worthy of him.

That is, just as the word we utter is an image of the Word who is God's Son, the wisdom implanted in us is an image of the Wisdom of God's Son. It gives us the ability to know and understand, and so makes us capable of receiving the one who is the all-creative Wisdom, through whom we also come to know the Father. "Whoever possesses the Son also possesses the Father," says Scripture, and "whoever accepts me accepts the One who sent me." And so, since this image of the Wisdom of God has been produced in us and in every creature, the true and creative Wisdom properly attributes to himself what applies to his creatures and says, "The Master created me in his works."

But because "the world was not wise enough to recognize God in his wisdom," as we have explained, "God decided to save those who believe by the 'stupid' message that we preach." Not wishing to be known any longer, as in earlier times, through the mere image and shadow of his Wisdom existing in creatures, he caused the true Wisdom himself to take on flesh, to become a human being, and to suffer death on the cross so that everyone who believes in him would be saved by that faith.

Yet this was the same Wisdom of God who had in the beginning revealed himself and his Father through himself by means of his image in creatures (which is why Wisdom, too, is said to be created). Later, as John reports, that Wisdom, which is also the Word, became flesh, and after destroying the power of death and saving our race, he revealed himself and his Father through himself more clearly. "Please grant," he prayed, "that they will know you, the only true God, and Prince Jesus as the one you sent."

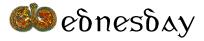
So now the whole earth is filled with the knowledge of God, since it is one and the same thing to know the Father through the Son, and to know the Son who comes from the Father. The Father takes pleasure from his Son, and with the same joy, the Son delights in the Father and says, "I was his joy; every day I took delight in his presence."

Since you have received Prince Jesus as Master, live your life in union with him, because the totality of divinity lives in him in bodily form.

You have only one teacher, the Prince, because the totality of divinity lives in him in bodily form.

#### Prayer

Dear God, our Father, since you have promised to remain forever with those who do what is virtuous and moral, please help us to live in your presence. We make this request through our Master, Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



#### First Reading

Wisdom has built its house, set up her seven pillars, slaughtered her meat, mixed her wine, and set her table and sent out her maidservants; she is calling from the heights over the city, "Any uninformed person should turn in here!" And she says to the ignorant, "Come, eat my bread and drink the wine I have mixed; abandon foolishness and live and walk on the intelligent path!" A person who corrects a sarcastic man only earns embarrassment, and one who reprimands a sinner hurts himself; do not correct the arrogant, or they will hate you,

Proverbs 9.1-18

# Wednesday

reprimand wise men, and they will love you. Tell a wise man what to do, and he will be wiser still, teach a virtuous man, and he advances in learning. Respect for YHWH is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the one who is holy is understanding; because it is by me that your life will be prolonged, and you will add extra years to your existence. If you are wise, your wisdom benefits you, and if you sneer at everything, you bear everything alone. Stupidity is a raucous woman, an idiot who knows nothing. She sits at her house door on a seat looking over the city's heights, and calls on passersby, "Any uninformed person should turn in here!" And she says to the ignorant, "Stolen water is sweet, and bread got by stealth tastes fine!"

But they do not know that inside are corpses

and that her guests are in the world beneath the earth.

A man once prepared a great banquet and sent all his servants to tell the guests, "Come, everything is ready."

Come, eat my bread and drink the wine I have mixed for you. Come, everything is ready.

Second Reading Commentary on Proverbs by Procopius of Gaza

"Wisdom built itself a house." God the Father's Power, who is a person himself, has built as his residence the whole world in which he lives by his activity, and also man who, since he was created in God's own image and likeness, has a nature which is partly visible and partly hidden from our eyes.

"And it has set up seven pillars." Wisdom gave the seven gifts on the Spirit to human beings who were made in the Prince's image to enable them to believe in the Prince and keep his commandments. A spiritual man grows by these gifts and develops until he finally reaches maturity through firm faith and the supernatural graces he receives. Knowledge

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stimulates virtue and virtue reflects knowledge; respect for the Master, understanding, and knowledge give the true orientation to his natural wisdom. Power makes him eager to search for understanding of the will of God as revealed in the laws by which the whole of creation is governed. Good advice distinguishes these very sacred and eternal laws of God from anything opposed to them, because these laws are meant for human beings to ponder, to promulgate, and to fulfill. Insight makes a man ready to embrace these expressions of God's will and to reject whatever contradicts them.

"It has mixed the wine in a bowl and set the table." Because the Word of God has mixed in human beings, as if they were bowls, a spiritual and material nature, and has given them a knowledge both of creation and himself as Creator, it is natural for what belongs to God to have the effect of wine on human minds. The Prince, the bread from heaven, is himself their nourishment which enables them to grow in virtue, and it is the Prince who quenches their thirst and gives them satisfaction from his teaching. He has prepared this rich banquet and spiritual feast for everyone who wants to share in it.

"It has sent out its maidservants with the sublime message that everyone is to come to drink from the bowl." The Prince has sent his Emissaries, the servants of his divine will, to deliver the message of the Good News, which, since it is spiritual, transcends both the natural and the written law. And he calls us by this to himself, in whom, as in a bowl, there was achieved a miraculous mixing of divine and human natures, while each still remains distinct. And he calls out through the Emissaries, "Is anyone uninformed? Turn to me." If anyone is so uninformed as to think in his heart that there is no God, he should renounce his disbelief and turn to me by faith; he is to know that I am the maker of everything and its Master.

And he says to those who have no wisdom, "Come, eat my bread and drink the wine I have prepared for you." He says to those who still have none of the deeds of faith and the higher knowledge that inspires them, "Come, eat my body, the bread that is nourishment for virtue, and drink my blood, the wine that cheers you with the joy of true knowledge and makes you divine, because in a miraculous way, I have mixed my divinity with my blood for your rescue."

# Chursday

Wisdom has built itself a house and set up seven pillars; it has prepared its wine and set its table.

Anyone who eats the meat of my body and drinks my blood lives in me and I in him, says the Master. It has prepared its wine and set its table.

#### Prayer

Dear God, our Father, since you have promised to remain forever with those who do what is virtuous and moral, please help us to live in your presence. 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

Proverbs 10.6-32

Blessings fall on virtuous heads, but a slap stops a vicious mouth. A virtuous man's memory receives blessings, while a vicious man's name will rot. A wise man listens to what he is commanded; it is blustering fools who trip. If a man conducts himself with integrity, he is secure, while those who take devious paths will be found out. A person who closes his eyes to trouble causes it, but a person who reprimands frankly promotes peace. A virtuous man's mouth is a spring of life, but the mouth of immoral people has lips of violence. Hatred foments conflict while love covers over every sin. Wisdom is found on intelligent lips, but a switch goes on a stupid back. The wise store up knowledge, while the mouths of fools bring on their ruin. A rich man's wealth is his fortified city, while what ruins the poor is their poverty.

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Virtuous labor leads to life, and what immoral people earn is sin. To listen to lessons is the path to life, while to refuse correction is to wander aimlessly. A person who hides his hatred has lips that lie, and anyone who spreads gossip is a fool. An abundance of words is not without sin, and one who curbs his lips is wise. A virtuous tongue is refined silver; an immoral heart is not worth much. Virtuous lips nourish many people, while fools die out from their stupidity. YHWH's blessing makes a man rich and he adds no suffering to it. Immorality is a fool's game; it is an intelligent man who has wisdom. The fears of evil people will be realized, while the desire of the virtuous will be granted. When the tornado passes, immoral people are gone, but the foundation of virtue stands firm forever. Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke in the eyes is a lazy man to those sending him on errands. Respect for YHWH prolongs life, but vice shortens one's years. The hope of the virtuous gives them joy, while vicious ambitions come to nothing. YHWH's ways are honest men's strength, and ruin comes to those who cheat. Virtuous people will never be disturbed, but evil people will not find homes on earth. A virtuous mouth gives birth to wisdom, while a perverse tongue will be cut out. Virtuous lips know how to please, and immoral mouths, how to pervert.

A virtuous mouth gives birth to wisdom, and its tongue says what is right; God's law is in the man's heart.

A virtuous man will be remembered forever; he will have no fear of bad news; God's law is in the man's heart.

### Second Reading Explanations of the Psalms by St. Ambrose We must always meditate on God's wisdom, and keep it in our hearts and on our lips. Our tongues must speak virtue, and the Law of God

and on our lips. Our tongues must speak virtue, and the Law of God must be in our hearts. Scripture tells us, "You are to speak of these commandments when you are seated in your house and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you rise." So let us speak of Master Jesus, because he is wisdom, he is the word, in fact the Word of God.

It is also written, "Open your lips, and let God's word be heard." God's word is uttered by those who repeat the teachings of the Prince and meditate on his sayings. We should speak this word. When we speak about wisdom, we are speaking of the Prince; when we speak of virtue, we are speaking of the Prince; when we speak of peace, we are speaking of the Prince, and when we speak of truth and life and redemption, we are speaking of the Prince.

"Open your lips," says Scripture, "and let God's word be heard." It is for you to open them, and it is for him to be heard. Similarly, David said, "I will listen to what the Master says in me." The very Son of God says, "Open your lips, and I will fill them." Not everyone can reach the perfection of wisdom as Solomon or Daniel did, but the spirit of wisdom is poured onto everyone in relation to capacity—that is, on all the faithful; if you believe, you have the spirit of wisdom.

And so meditate at all times on what deals with God, and speak of what deals with God "when you are seated in your house." By "house" we can understand the Church, or the hidden place within us, so that we are to speak within ourselves. Speak with good judgment, so that you will not fall into sin by excess talking. "When you are seated in your house" speak to yourself as if you were talking to a judge. "When you speak along the road," speak in such a way as never to be idle. You speak "along the road" if you speak in the Prince, because the Prince is the way. When you walk along this way, speak to yourself, and speak to the Prince. Hear him say to you, "I desire to have people pray in every place, and lift holy hands without anger or quarreling." When you lie down, speak so that the sleep of death will not steal in on you. Listen and learn

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how you are to speak as you lie down: "I will not give sleep to my eyes or let my eyelids doze off until I find a place for the Master, a home for the God of Jacob."

When you get up or rise again, speak of the Prince, so as to fulfill what you are commanded. Listen and learn how the Prince is to wake you from sleep: your soul says, "I hear my brother knocking at the door." Then the Prince says to you, "Open the door for me, my sister, my wife." Listen and learn how you are to waken the Prince: Your soul says, "I beg you, daughters of Jerusalem, waken or reawaken the love of my heart." The Prince is that love.

God has given us Jesus the Prince to be our wisdom, our strength, our holiness, and our redemption; this is why Scripture tells us: "If you want to brag, brag about the Master."

We have all received some of what in him is complete; we have received as gifts what belongs to him by right. This is why Scripture tells us, "If you want to brag, brag about the Master."

#### Prayer

Dear God, our Father, since you have promised to remain forever with those who do what is virtuous and moral, please help us live in your presence. 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

Proverbs 15.8-9, 16-17, 25-26, 29, 33, 16.1-9, 17.5

A sacrifice from an immoral man is disgusting to YHWH, but prayer from an honest man is his delight.

Immoral conduct is disgusting to YHWH, but he loves people who follow virtue.

A little possessed with respect for YHWH

is better than great wealth with anxiety.

A dinner with nothing but vegetables and love

# FRIDAY

is better than a fattened calf with hatred. YHWH will destroy the proud man's house, but keep the widow's territory intact. What immoral people think is disgusting to YHWH, but what pure people say he finds pleasant. YHWH keeps himself aloof from immoral people but listens to virtuous people's prayers. Respect for YHWH is training in wisdom, and self-effacement goes before honor. Plans in the heart belong to men, but what the tongue says belongs to YHWH. Everything a man does is pure in his own eyes, but YHWH weighs his spirit. Entrust what you do to YHWH and your plans will succeed. YHWH made everything for himself, and he even made the immoral for the day of doom. Everyone whose heart is proud is disgusting to YHWH; all of them together will not escape punishment. It is by mercy and fidelity that evil deeds are atoned, and a person leaves sin by respecting YHWH. When a person's conduct pleases YHWH he makes even his enemies be at peace with him. A little with virtue is better than vast wealth without honesty. A man's mind plans his conduct, but YHWH directs his steps.

Never forget the Master, who led you out of Egypt; you are to respect the Master, your God, and be a slave only to him.

Respect for the Master is training in wisdom, and humility is the path to honor. You are to respect the Master, your God, and be a slave only to him.

Second Reading Treatises on the First Letter of John by St. Augustine

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We have been promised that "we will be like him because we will see him as he is." By these words, the tongue has done its best; now we must apply meditation in our hearts. Though they are the words of St. John, what are they in comparison with the divine reality? And how can we, so far below John in what we deserve, add anything of our own? Yet we have received, as John told us, an anointing by the Holy One, which teaches us within ourselves more than our tongue can speak. So let us turn to this source of knowledge, and because at present we cannot see, make it our business to desire the divine vision.

The entire life of a good Christian is in fact an exercise of holy desire. You do not see what you long for, but the very act of desiring makes you ready, so that when he comes you will see and be completely satisfied.

Suppose you are going to fill some receptacle or container, and you know you will be given a large amount. You begin stretching the sack or wineskin or whatever it is. Why? Because you know how much you will have to put in it, and your eyes tell you there is not enough room. And so by stretching it, you increase the volume of the sack, and this is how God deals with us; simply by making us wait, he increases our desire, which in turn enlarges the capacity of our soul, making it able to receive what is to be given to us.

And so, brothers and sisters, let us go on desiring, because we will be filled. Notice St. Paul stretching, so to speak, his ability to receive what is to come: "It is not that I have already attained it," he said, "or am perfect. My brothers and sisters, I do not consider that I have already attained it." We could ask him, "If you have not attained it, what are you doing in this life?" And Paul answers, "I do this one thing: I forget what is there behind me and stretch forward to what lies ahead, and hurry on toward the prize I am called to in the life above." Not only did Paul say he stretched forward, but he added that he hurried on toward a chosen goal. He realized that in fact he was still short of receiving "what no eye has seen or ear heard, what has not entered man's mind to conceive."

This is our Christian life. By desiring heaven we exercise the powers of the soul. But this exercise will only be effective to the extent that we free ourselves from desires leading to infatuation with this world. Let me return to the example I already used, that of filling an empty container. God means to fill each of you with what is good—so dump out what is bad. If he wishes to fill you with honey and you are full of vinegar, where

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is the honey to go? The container has to be emptied of its contents and then washed. Yes, it must be washed clean even if you have to work hard and scour it; it must be made fit for the new thing, whatever it is.

We could go on speaking analogously of honey, gold, or wine, but whatever we say cannot express the reality we are to receive. The name of that reality is God. But can anyone claim that in that one syllable we utter the full expanse of our heart's desire? And so, whatever we say is necessarily less than the full truth; we must stretch ourselves toward the standard of the Prince, so that when he comes he will be able to fill us with his presence. "Then we will be like him, because we will see him as he is."

Find your pleasure in the Master, and he will give you your heart's desire. Commit your life to the Master and trust in him, and he will give you your heart's desire.

#### Prayer

Dear God, our Father, since you have promised to remain forever with those who do what is virtuous and moral, please help us to live in your presence. 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

Proverbs 31.10-31

Can anyone find a virtuous wife? Her value is far beyond rubies. Her husband safely trusts his heart to her, and he will have nothing but benefit from it. She does him good, not harm every day of her life. She finds wool and flax and does not mind working with her hands. She is like merchant ships,

bringing food from far-off places; she rises while it is still night and provides food for her family, seeing to it that the servants receive their share. She examines a field and buys it, and from her earnings, plants a vineyard. She puts on the belt of strength and develops her arms. She sees to it that what she produces is good, and has her lamp lit at night. She puts her hand to the distaff with her fingers twirling the spindle. She holds out her hands to the poor and extends a hand to the destitute. She has no fear of snow for her family, because all of them are dressed in warm clothes. She makes her own coverlets; and her clothing is fine linen and velvet. Her husband is prominent at the city gates, where he sits with the elders of the land. She makes linen clothes, which she sells, and supplies belts for the merchants. She dresses herself in strength and dignity, and will find her joy in times to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and kindly advices comes from her tongue. She watches over what her household does and does not sit back and do nothing but eat. Her children come forward to admire her, and her husband sings her praises: "Many girls have done well, but you are better than all of them." Charm is deceitful, and beauty does not last; it is a woman who respects YHWH who wins praise. Give her everything she deserves, and let what she does be what is praised in the city gates.

# SACURDAY

She sat down to work with courage and put out all her strength; and so her lamp will never go out.

The Master will help her at dawn; his loving presence will be with her. He has his home in her, and she will not waver; and so her lamp will never go out.

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

Husband and wife, by the marriage compact, are no longer two; they are one physical thing. By their intimate union of persons and of actions, they give mutual help and service to each other, experience the meaning of their unity, and gain an ever deeper understanding of it day by day.

This intimate union in the mutual self-giving of two persons, as well as the good of the children, demands full fidelity from both, and an indissoluble unity between them.

The Prince, the Master, has abundantly blessed this richly complex love, which springs from the divine source of love and is founded on the model of his union with the Church.

In earlier times, God met his people in a Treaty of love and fidelity. So now the Savior of mankind, the Bridegroom of the Church, meets Christian husbands and wives in the sacrament of matrimony. Further, he remains with them so that, just as he loved the Church and gave himself up for her, husband and wife will, in mutual self-giving, love each other with perpetual fidelity.

True married love is caught up into God's love; it is guided and enriched by the redeeming power of the Prince and the saving action of the Church, so that the partners will be effectively led to God, and receive help and strength in the sublime responsibility of parenthood.

Christian partners are therefore strengthened, and, so to speak, consecrated, by a special sacrament for the duties and the dignity of their state. By the power of this sacrament, they fulfill their obligations to each other and to their family, and are filled with the spirit of the Prince. This spirit pervades their whole lives with faith, hope, and love, and thus they promote their own perfection and each other's sanctification, and so contribute together to the greater glory of God.

Hence, with parents leading the way by example and family prayer, their children—in fact, everyone within the family circle—will find it

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easier to make progress in natural virtues, in salvation, and in holiness. Husband and wife, raised to the dignity and the responsibility of parenthood, will be zealous in fulfilling their task as educators, especially in the sphere of religious education, a task that is primarily their own.

Children, as active members of the family, contribute in their own way to the holiness of their parents. With the love of grateful hearts, with loving respect and trust, they will return the generosity of their parents, and will stand by them as true sons and daughters when their parents meet with hardship and the loneliness of old age.

This is a great mystery, but I am saying it of the Prince and of his Church; the Prince loved the Church and gave himself up for her.

A man must love his wife as he loves himself, and a woman must respect her husband; the Prince loved the Church and gave himself up for her.

#### Prayer

Dear God, our Father, since you have promised to remain forever with those who do what is virtuous and right, please help us to live in your presence. 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

Qoheleth 1.1-18

Words of David's son Qoheleth, King in Jerusalem: Futility! Complete futility! says Qoheleth; Futility! Complete futility! Everything is futile! What good does all a man's labor do him as he sweats at it under the sun? One generation goes, another comes and the earth stays the same forever. The sun, too, rises and the sun sets and goes back to the place where it rises. The wind blows south and turns around to the north; the wind turns this way and that constantly, and comes back round on itself. All the rivers run down to the sea, but the sea never fills up; the rivers go back again to the place they came from. Everything is full of drudgery; no man can speak of all of it. Eyes are not sated with their seeing, and ears do not fill up with hearing. What has happened is what will happen; what is done is what will be done, and there is nothing new under the sun.

Is there anything where it can be said, "Look! This is new!"? It has already happened in the ancient times before us.

There is no recollection of the past,

and there will be no remembrance of the future

by the ones who come after it.

I, Qoheleth, was King over Israel in Jerusalem; and I determined to examine and search out with wisdom everything that happens under the sun: this wearisome task God has given mortal men for their exercise. I have seen everything that has been done under the sun, and in fact it is all a futile attempt to grasp hold of the wind.

What is crooked cannot be straightened,

and what is missing cannot be replaced.

I pondered this in my heart, and said, "I have now reached greatness and achieved more wisdom than everyone before me in Jerusalem; my heart has understood great wisdom and knowledge." And I applied myself to know wisdom and to know madness and foolishness. And I realized that this is also an attempt grasp hold of the wind, because there is a great deal of suffering in wisdom,

and a person who gains knowledge gains grief.

I have seen everything that happens beneath the sun, and that it is all a futile attempt to grasp hold of the wind. Just as a man comes naked out of his mother's womb, he will go away naked in the end; there is nothing he can take with him.

We brought nothing with us when we came into the world, and we can take nothing with us when we go. Just as a man comes naked from his mother's womb, he will go away naked in the end; there is nothing he can take with him.

#### Second Reading Chapters on Charity by St. Maximus the Confessor

Charity is an attitude of mind which prefers nothing to the knowledge of God. If a man possesses any strong attachment to what is on this earth, he cannot possess true charity. That is, anyone who really loves God would rather know and love God than his creatures; the whole set and longing of his mind is always directed toward him.

And that is because God is far superior to all his creation, since everything which exists has been made by God and for him; and so, in deserting God, who is beyond compare, for the inferior works of creation, a man shows that he values God, the source of creation, less than creation itself.

The Master reminds us himself, "Whoever loves me will keep my commandments. And this is my commandment: for you to love each other." So a man who does not love his neighbor is not obeying God's command, and one who does not obey his command cannot love God. It is a blessing for a man to love all other human beings equally; but if he really loves God, he must love his neighbors absolutely. This kind of man cannot hoard wealth; instead, like God himself, he gives generously from his own resources to each person as his needs warrant.

And since he imitates God's generosity, the only distinction he draws is the person's need; he does not distinguish between a good man and a bad one, a virtuous man and a vicious one. But his own will's goodness makes him prefer the man who is trying to be virtuous over the one who is depraved.

A charitable mind is not displayed simply in giving money; it is shown even more by personal service as well as by the communication of what God says to others. In fact, if a man's service toward his brothers is genuine, and if he really renounces worldly concerns, he is freed from selfish desires, because he now shares in God's own knowledge and love. Since he does possess God's love, he does not experience weariness as he follows the Master, his God; instead, following the prophet Jeremiah, he withstands every type of reprimand and hardship without even harboring an evil thought against anyone.

That is, Jeremiah warns us, "We are the Master's Temple." And you should not be saying, "Mere faith in our Master Prince Jesus can save me." By itself faith accomplishes nothing; because even the devils believe and are terrified. No, faith must be joined to an active love of God which is expressed in good deeds. A charitable man is distinguished by sincere and patient service to his fellow men; it also means using things correctly.

I am giving you a new commandment: you are to have the same love for each other as I have for you. Anyone who loves his brother lives in the light.

We can be sure that we know the Prince only if we keep his commandments. Anyone who loves his brother lives in the light.

#### Prayer

Dear Father, please keep before us the wisdom and love you have revealed in your Son, and help us to be like him in what we say and do. 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

### Qoheleth 2.1-3, 12-26

I said to myself, "Come now, I will experiment with pleasure; and so enjoy what you like." But in fact, this was also futility. I called laughter insanity, and said of pleasure, "What is it good for?" I searched out ways of satisfying my body with wine while I guided my mind with wisdom, and I took up foolishness to see what was good for mortal men to do under heaven during the time they lived.

I went on to consider wisdom, insanity, and foolishness;

- and then I saw that wisdom is as much greater than foolishness as light is than darkness;
- a wise man has eyes in his head,

while a fool walks around in darkness.

Yet I noticed myself

that the same fate happens to all of them,

So I told myself,

"What happens to fools

happens to me,

So how was I wiser?"

Then I told myself,

"This is futile also."

There is no more remembrance of a wise man

than of a fool as time goes on,

since everything that now exists will be forgotten in the future;

and how does a wise man die?

Like a fool.

And so I hated my live, because what I did under the sun was painful to

### Donday

me, because everything is a futile attempt to catch the wind.

And then I hated the work I toiled at under the sun, because I had to leave its return to the man who is to come after me; and who knows whether he is wise or a fool? Yet he will rule over all the work I labored at and revealed my wisdom under the sun. This is more futility.

So I became depressed and despaired of all the labor I had worked at under the son, because here we have a man whose labor is wisely done, and done with knowledge and skill; and yet he must leave his property to someone else who has not worked for it. This is more futility, and a terrible wrong. What does a man have to show for all his work and for his worry and his effort exerted under the sun? All his days are painful, and his work is a burden, and even in the night his heart finds no rest. This is also futile.

There is nothing better for a man than to eat and drink, and for his soul to enjoy good results from his work; and I also saw that this was from the hand of God. That is, can anyone eat and enjoy himself more than I? God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man is good in his sight; but he gives sinners the work of amassing and collecting things, for him to give to whoever God sees fit. This is more futility, and an attempt to grasp the wind.

God gives wisdom, knowledge, and joy to the one who pleases him; but to the sinner he gives a weary heart and a foolish eagerness to amass riches. This is futility, and an attempt to grasp the wind.

The love of money is the root of everything bad, and some men in their greed have brought on themselves a great deal of bitter suffering. This is futility and an attempt to grasp the wind.

#### Second Reading A Homily on Qoheleth by St. Gregory of Nyssa

We will be blessed with clear vision if we keep our eyes fixed on the Prince, because, as Paul teaches, he is our head, and has no shadow of evil in him. St. Paul himself and everyone who has reached the same level of sanctity had their eyes on the Prince, and so has everyone who lives and moves and has his being in him.

Since no darkness can be seen by anyone surrounded by light, no trivialities can capture the attention of anyone who has his eyes on the Prince. The one who keeps his eyes on the head and source of the whole

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universe has them on virtue in all its perfection; he has them on truth, on honesty, on immortality, and on everything else that is good, because the Prince is goodness itself.

"A wise man, then, turns his eyes toward the One who is his head, but a fool gropes about in darkness." No one who puts his lamp under a bed instead of on a lampstand will receive any light from it. People are often considered blind and useless when they make the supreme Good their goal and devote themselves to contemplation of God; but Paul took pride in this and declared himself a fool for the Prince's sake. The reason he said "We are fools for the Prince's sake" was that his mind was free from all earthly preoccupations. It was as though he said, "We are blind to the life here below because our eyes are raised toward the One who is our head."

And so, without board or lodging, he traveled from place to place, destitute, naked, and exhausted by hunger and thirst. When people saw him in captivity, or whipped, or shipwrecked, or led about in chains, they could hardly help thinking him a miserable sight. Still, even while he suffered all this at men's hand's he always looked toward the One who was his head, and asked, "What can separate us from the Prince's love, which is in Jesus? Suffering? Pain? Persecution? Hunger" Nakedness? Danger? Death?" In other words, "What can force me to take my eyes from the one who is my head and turn them toward what is contemptible?"

He asks us to follow his example: "Search for what is above," which is only another way of saying, "Keep your eyes on the Prince."

Just as the eyes of slaves are on their masters, our eyes are fixed on the Master, our God, as we wait for him to have mercy on us.

I am the light of the world. No one who follows me will ever walk in darkness; he will have the light of life. Our eyes are fixed on the Master, our God, as we wait for him to have mercy on us.

#### Prayer

Dear Father, please keep before us the wisdom and love you have revealed in your Son, and help us to be like him in what we say and do, since he is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



### First Reading

Qoheleth 3.1-22

There is an occasion for everything, and a time for every purpose under heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to reap what was planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to tear down, and a time to build; a time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to grieve and a time to dance; a time to throw stones away and a time to collect stones; a time to embrace and a time to keep from embracing; a time to gain and a time to lose; a time to preserve and a time to discard; a time to rip and a time to sew; a time to be quiet and a time to speak; a time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace. What benefit does a laborer receive from his labor? I have seen the God-

given tasks which men are to busy themselves with. He made everything

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appropriate for its time; but he has put eternity into their hearts, even though men cannot discover what God has done from beginning to end.

I know nothing better for human beings than to enjoy themselves, and to do good in their lives; also that human beings should eat and drink and enjoy the benefits of his work; this is God's gift. I know that, whatever God does,

it will last forever.

Nothing can add to it,

and nothing be removed from it.

God does it for human beings to show him reverence.

Whatever exists has already existed,

and whatever will exist has already existed;

and God restores what has gone by.

I also saw this under the sun:

Instead of good judgment,

there was evil;

Instead of virtue,

there was vice.

I said in my heart,

God will be judge over the virtuous and the vicious,

because there is a time there for every goal and every deed.

I said in my heart, "As to the way men are, God gives them troubles, so that they will see that they are themselves like animals." What happens to human beings also happens to animals; the same thing occurs in them; one dies in the same way as the other. They all obviously have the same breath, the same spirit, and humans have no advantage over animals, since everything is futile. Everyone goes to the same place; everything comes from dirt and everything goes back to dirt. Who knows if the spirit in human beings goes up and animals' spirits go down?

So I saw that there was nothing better for a man than to enjoy what he has done, because that is his heritage—because who can enable him to see what will happen after him?

The time is growing short, and those who have to deal with the world should not become absorbed in it, because the world as we know it is going to cease to exist.

There is an occasion for everything and a time for every purpose

under the sun, because the world as we know it is going to cease to exist.

Second reading A Homily on Qoheleth by St. Gregory of Nyssa "There is a time to be born and a time to die." The fact that there is a natural link between birth and death is expressed very clearly in this text of Scripture. Death invariably follows birth, and everyone who is born finally comes to the grave.

"There is a time to be born and a time to die." God grant that my birth and my death will be at the right time! Of course, no one imagines that the speaker regards as acts of natural virtue our physical birth and death, neither of which our own will plays any part in. A woman does not give birth because she chooses to do so; and no one dies as a result of his own decision. Obviously, there is neither virtue nor vice in anything that is beyond our control, so we must consider what is meant by a birth and death that are at the right time.

It seems to me that the birth referred to here is our rescue, as is suggested by the prophet Isaiah. This reaches its full term and is not stillborn when, after it is conceived by reverence for God, the soul's own labor pains bring it to the light of day. We are in a sense our own parents, and we give birth to ourselves by our own free choice of what is good. This kind of choice becomes possible for us when we have taken God into ourselves and become children of God, children of the Supreme Being. On the other hand, if what the Emissary calls "the form of the Prince" has not been produced in us, we abort ourselves. The man of God must reach maturity.

Now if the meaning of a birth "at the right time" is clear, the meaning of a timely death is also. For St. Paul, every moment was a time to die, as he declares in his letters: "I swear by the pride I take in you that I face death every day." Elsewhere, he says, "For your sake we are being assassinated daily" and "we feel like people condemned to death." How Paul died every day is perfectly obvious; he never gave himself up to a sinful life, and kept his body under constant control. He carried death with him—the Prince's death—wherever he went. He was always being crucified with the Prince; it was not his own life he lived; it was the Prince who lived in him. This certainly was a timely death, a death whose end was true life.

"I put to death and I give life," God says, teaching us that death to

# 142 Sevench Week or Ordinary Cime

sin and life in the Spirit is his gift, and promising that whatever he kills he will restore to life again.

I alone bring both death and life; I alone wound and heal. No one can escape my grasp.

I hold the keys of death and the land of the dead. No one can escape my grasp.

#### Prayer

Dear Father, please keep before us the wisdom and love you have revealed in your Son, and help us be like him in what we say and do, because he is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



### First Reading

*Qoheleth* 5.10-6.8

A man who loves money will not be satisfied with money, and one who loves wealth with more wealth. This too is futility. When possessions increase, the ones who consume them increase; so what good does this do their owners except to feast their eyes on them? A working man's sleep is pleasant whether he eats little or a great deal; but a rich man's abundance will not let him sleep. There is a serious harm I have seen under the sun: riches kept to the detriment of the owner. When he loses the wealth because of reverses, and he fathers a son, there is nothing in his hand. A man will return naked, just as he came from his mother's womb; he will go the way he came and will take nothing from his labor to carry away with him in his hands.

And this is also a terrible wrong,

to leave just exactly as one came,

and what good did it do him to labor under the sun?

He eats in darkness every day of his life,

and has a great deal of suffering, sickness, and anger.

Here is what I have seen: It is good and proper for a man to eat and drink and enjoy the benefit of all the work he toils at under the sun every day of his life that God gives him; this is his heritage. And even for the man God has given riches and wealth to and power to consume it, the gift of God is to accept his heritage and enjoy his work; because he will not pay attention to how short his life is, because God keeps him busy enjoying himself.

There is something bad I have seen under the sun which is common with people: a man God has given riches and property and honor, so that he has all that he could desire, and yet God has not given him the power to consume it, and a stranger eats it up. This is futility and a serious wrong.

If a man fathers a hundred children and lives a long time, so that he reaches a great age—but his soul is not satisfied with his possessions, or if he is deprived of burial, then I say that a stillborn child is better off then he, because the child comes in futility and leaves in darkness, and his name is covered in darkness. Though he has not seen the sun or had any knowledge, he has more rest than the other man, even if he lives a thousand years longer, and has had no satisfaction with what he has. Do not both of them go to the same place?

All of man's work is for his mouth,

and yet the soul is not satisfied.

What more does a wise man have than a fool?

What does a poor man have

if he knows how to behave in life?

Please keep falsehood and lying from me, Master; give me neither poverty nor riches, and please provide me only with the food I need.

I have put my trust in you, Master; my destiny is in your hands. Please provide me only with the food I need.

Second Reading

Commentary on Qoheleth by St. Jerome

# 144 Sevench Week or Ordinary Cime

"Every man has received a gift from God if God has given him wealth and property and power to enjoy them and to accept his heritage and enjoy his work, because he will not notice his life as it passes because God has filled his heart with joy." Compare this man with the one who is anxious about his wealth and is full of annoyance as he piles up possessions that are going to go out of existence. Our text says that it is better to enjoy what you have. The first man at least has some pleasure in what he has, while the second is bothered by too much worry.

And the reason is that the ability to enjoy riches is a gift from God; "he does not pay attention to his life as it passes," because God allows him to enjoy the moment. Still, it is better to understand the text with the Emissary as referring to God's gift of spiritual food and drink; human beings should contemplate goodness in their deeds, because it takes a great deal of work and study for us to contemplate true goodness. And this is our heritage: to enjoy study and work. This is a good goal, but not completely good "until the Prince is revealed in our lives."

"All the work of a man is to satisfy his mouth, and yet his spirit will be hungry, because what does a wise man have more than a fool, except the knowledge of how to live?" All that human beings work for in this world is consumed by their mouths, chewed up by their teeth, and passed into the stomach for digestion. And even when something pleases taste, the pleasure only lasts as long as the person can taste it.

But after all this, the mind of the eater gets no satisfaction, because he will want to eat again, and neither wise man nor fool can live without food, and even a poor man wants nothing more than to keep his body alive and not die of starvation. Again, it may be because the spirit gains nothing useful from feeding the body. Food is the same for wise men and fools alike, and for a poor man, food is wealth.

But it is better to understand this text as referring to the man in Qoheleth who is learned in the sacred Scripture, and knows that neither mouth nor spirit is satisfied as long as he still desires learning. In this, a wise man has an advantage over a fool, because if he knows himself to be poor (and the poor are said to have received a blessing in the Good News), he makes an effort to understand the important things in life, and he walks the "cramped and narrow road that leads to life." He is poor in immorality, and he knows where the Prince, who is our life, is to be found.

## Chursday

Master, Father and God of my life, please do not leave me to my evil thoughts, never let me look down disdainfully on others, protect me from the passionate cravings of my body, and preserve my soul from useless and shameful desire.

Please do not abandon me, my Master, or my faults will increase and my sins will grow more and more; and preserve my soul from useless and shameful desire.

#### Prayer

Dear Father, please keep before us the wisdom and love you have revealed in your Son, and help us to be like him in what we say and do, because he is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



#### First Reading

#### *Qoheleth* 6.12-7.28

And who knows what is good for a man in life, every day of his futile life which he passes like a shadow? Who can tell a man what will happen after him under the sun?

A good name is better than precious perfume,

and the day of death is better than the day of birth;

it is better to go into a house of mourning

than to enter a house where there is feasting,

because that is the end of every man,

and the living will take it to heart.

Sorrow is better than laughter,

because a heart is improved by a sad face;

hearts of the wise are in the house of mourning;

it is the hearts of fools that are in houses where there is mirth.

It is better to hear a reprimand from a wise man

than for a man to be the subject of fools' songs;

because the laughter of a fool

is like thorns crackling under a pot.

And this is also futility.

## 146 Sevench Week or Ordinary Cime

True, oppression destroy's a wise man's reason, and a bribe degrades one's heart. The end of something is better than its beginning; a patient spirit is better than a proud spirit. Do not be quick in your spirit to be angry, because anger lives in the breasts of fools. Do not say, "Why were the old days better than these?" because your question here is not a wise one. Wisdom is good—with an inheritance, and it is a benefit to those who see the sun; because wisdom is protection just as money is protection, but the virtue of wisdom is that wisdom gives life to its possessors. Consider what God has done. Who can straighten what he has made crooked? In time of prosperity, enjoy it, but think of this in hard times: God certainly made one just as much as the other so that humans can find no fault with him. I saw everything in my futile days: a good man dies in his virtue, and an evil man lives long in his vice. Do not be too virtuous or excessively wise; why should you destroy yourself? Do not be too immoral, or be stupid; why should you die before your time? It is good for you to grasp this, but not let the other rule go, because a man who respects God will escape everything. Wisdom gives more strength to a wise man than ten rulers of the city, but there is no virtuous man on earth who does good and does not sin. Do not take to heart everything people say, or you might hear your slave curse you;

because you know that many times you have cursed others yourself. I examined all this in wisdom; I said, "I will be wise"; but it is far from me. And who can discover what is far off and very, very deep? I applied my mind to know, to search and find out wisdom and the reason for things; to know that immorality is stupidity, and stupidity is insanity. I find more bitter than death a woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are chains. A man who pleases God will escape her, but she will trap a sinner. "Here is what I have discovered," says Qoheleth, "adding one thing to another to find the reason which my soul is looking for but cannot find. I have found one man in a thousand here, but I have found no woman among all of them."

Can anyone say, "My heart is pure; I am not a sinner"? There is no living man so holy that he does good and never sins.

If we claim to be sinless, we are deceiving ourselves; but if we admit our sins, then God, who is faithful and just, will forgive us. There is no living man so holy that he does good and never sins.

#### Second Reading

#### An Instruction by St. Columban

God is everywhere in his immensity, and is nearby everywhere. As he says of himself, "I am a god that is close by, not a God that is far away." The God we are searching for is not one who lives at a distance from us, because we have him present with us, if only we are deserving. He has his home in us in the same way the soul lives in the body, if we are healthy cells in his body; if we are dead to sin. Then in actual fact, the one who said, "I will make my home in them and walk among them" is living in us. If we deserve to have his presence in us, then in fact we are made living by him as living cells in his body. As the Emissary says, "We live, move, and have our being in him."

And I ask, who will search out the Supreme Being in his own reality, because he is beyond words or understanding? Who will penetrate the secrets of God? Who will make the claim that he knows the infinite God, who fills everything, and yet includes everything, who pervades everything and reaches beyond everything, who holds everything in his hand and yet escapes the grasp of anything? "No one has ever seen him as he is."

And so no one is to presume to search out the unsearchable things of God: his nature, the kind of existence he has, his selfhood. These are beyond telling, beyond scrutiny, beyond investigation. Simply believe with simplicity, but with strength too, that this is how God is and how he will be, because God is incapable of change.

Then who is God? He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; one God. Those who want to understand the unfathomable depths of God must first consider the world of nature. Knowledge of the Trinity is fittingly compared with the depth of the ocean. Wisdom asks, "Who will find out what is so very deep?" In the same way as the depths of the sea are invisible to human sight, the Godhead of the Trinity is found to be beyond the grasp of human understanding. If anyone, I say, wants to know what he should believe, he must not imagine that he understands better through speech than through belief; the knowledge of God that he is looking for will be farther off than it was before.

So search out the highest wisdom by the perfection of your life, not by reasoning in words, by the faith that comes from simplicity of heart, not be speech and not from the learned speculations of immoral people. If you look for the God who cannot be defined in words by means of discussions, "he will go farther away from you" than he was before. If you search him out by faith, "wisdom will stand" where wisdom lives, "at the gates." Wisdom will be seen, at least in part, where wisdom is. But wisdom is also to some extent truly attained when the invisible God is the object of faith, in a way beyond our understanding, because we must believe in God, even though he is invisible, because he is partly seen by a heart that is pure.

Master, your love reaches to the heavens and your fidelity to the clouds. Your virtue is like the mountains of God, and your pronouncements like

## PRIDAY

the fathomless ocean.

How deep are the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments! Your virtue is like the mountains of God, and your pronouncements like the fathomless ocean.

#### Prayer

Dear Father, please keep before us the wisdom and love you have revealed in your Son, and help us to be like him in what we say and do, because he is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



#### First Reading

#### *Qoheleth* 8.5-9.10

One who keeps YHWH's command will have no harm happen to him, and a wise man's heart knows times and the proper choice,

because there is a time and a proper choice for everything though it adds a great deal to man's suffering

that he does not know what will happen.

Who can tell him how things will be?

No one has power over his breath to keep it,

and no one has power over the day of his death.

There is no cease-fire in that war,

and immorality will not save those who devote themselves to it.

I have seen all this, and applied my mind to every deed done under the sun; while one man tyrannizes over another to his harm.

Then I saw evil men buried; and as they left the sacred place, they were praised in the city for what they had done. And this too is futility, because the sentence against wrongdoers is not carried out quickly, and this is why the hearts of mortal men are fixed on doing wrong.

But even though a sinner does evil a hundred times and lives a long life, I know for certain that good will come to those who respect God and have reverence for him, and ruin will come on immoral people, and his days will not go on and on, because they are like a shadow, since he has no respect for God.

## 150 Sevench Week of Ordinary Cime

There is futility that happens on earth: that there are virtuous people who have happen to them what should be the result of immoral actions, and there are immoral people who have happen to them what should result from virtuous actions. I said that this too is futility.

So I recommended enjoyment, because a man has nothing better under the sun than to eat, drink, and enjoy himself; this is what will stay with him in his work all the days of life which God gives him under the sun.

When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to see what people busy themselves with on earth, I found out that a man cannot discover all the work God does under the sun, even if he sees no sleep day or night. Even though a man works hard at finding it, he will not discover it; and even if a wise man tries to know it, he will not find it either.

But I kept this in mind so that I could report all of it: that virtuous and wise people and what they do are in God's hands. People cannot recognize love or hatred by what they see before them; everything happens to everyone without differentiation.

The same event happens to virtuous and vicious people,

to good, clean ones, and to unclean ones,

to the people making sacrifices and those who make no sacrifice. The sinner is the same as a good man;

one who curses and a person who is afraid to curse.

And this is a wrong that happens under the sun: that the same thing happens to everyone. It is true that men's hearts are full of evil; there is insanity in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the land of the dead. But there is hope for those who are among the living; a living dog is better than a dead lion.

True, the living know that they will die,

but corpses know nothing,

and they have no more reward,

because there is no more remembrance of them.

And their love, their hatred, and their envy have died,

and they will never again have a share

in what is done under the sun.

Go eat your bread and enjoy it,

and drink your wine with pleasure,

because God has already accepted what you have done;

dress yourselves in white clothes

and do not spare the scented oil on your head.

Live and take pleasure in the wife whom you love all the days of the futile life he has given you under the sun—for all your days of futility, because that is your lot in life and in the work you perform under the sun.

Do whatever your hand finds to do with all your might, because there is no work or reasoning or knowledge or wisdom in the grave you are headed for.

No eye has seen, no ear heard, nor has the heart of man conceived what God has prepared for those who love him. God has revealed this through his Spirit, who scrutinizes everything, even the depths of God.

Man stands bewildered before the mystery of all God's deeds. God has revealed this through his Spirit, who scrutinizes everything, even the depths of God.

#### Second Reading

## Commentary on Qoheleth by St. Gregory of Argrigentum

"Come eat your bread and enjoy it, and take pleasure in drinking your win, because what you have done has pleased God." If we were to interpret this text in its obvious, ordinary sense, it would be correct to call it a virtuous encouragement, in which Qoheleth advises us to take up a simple way of life and be led by teaching that involves a genuine faith in God. Then we can eat our bread and enjoy it and take pleasure in drinking our wine; we will not fall into slanderous speech or be involved in anything devious; we would think what is right and, as far as we can, help the poor and destitute with mercy and generosity, and really be dedicated to pursuits and good deeds that please God.

But a spiritual interpretation of the text leads us to a higher meaning, and teaches us to take this as the heavenly and mystical bread, the one that has come down from heaven and brought life to the world, and to drink a spiritual wine and take pleasure in it, the wine being what flowed from the side of the real vine at the time of his suffering that saved us. The Good News of our rescue says this on this point: "When Jesus had taken bread and said the blessing over it, he told his holy students and emissaries, 'Take this and eat it; this is my body, which is broken for you

## 152 Sevench Week or Ordinary Cime

for forgiveness of sins'; and in the same way, he took the cup and said, 'All of you drink from this; this is my blood ratifying the new treaty, blood which will be shed for you and for many, many others for the forgiveness of sins.'" That is, whoever eats this bread and drinks this mystical wine enjoys true happiness and exclaims in his joy, "You have put happiness into my heart!"

In fact, I think this is the bread and the wine referred to in the book of Proverbs by God's personified Wisdom, our Savior the Prince, when it says, "Come eat my bread and drink the wine I have mixed for you," and by doing so refers to our mystical sharing in the Word. That is, those who have the right to receive this are always dressed in deeds of light, which shine like a brilliant illumination, as the Master says in the Good News: "Have your light shine in front of people, so that they will see your good deeds and praise your Father who is in heaven." And, in fact, oil appears to flow over their heads continually, the oil that is the Spirit of Truth, who guards and preserves them from all the harm of sin.

The Master is right beside me; I will not be dislodged. And that is why my heart is full of joy, and my spirit is glad.

The Master is my inheritance and the cup I am served. And that is why my heart is full of joy, and my spirit is glad.

#### Prayer

Dear Father, please keep before us the wisdom and love you have revealed in your Son, and help us to be like him in what we say and do, because he is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



First Reading

Qoheleth 11.7-12.14

Light is really pleasant; and it is cheering for the eyes to see the sun; but if a man lives many years and enjoys all of them,

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he still should remember the time of darkness, because it will be long. Everything that is coming is futility. Enjoy your youth, young man, and take your pleasure while you are young; follow your heart and your eyes, but realize for all of this God will pass his judgment on you. And so root sorrow out of your heart and remove evil from your body, because childhood and youth are futility. And remember your Creator now, during your youth, before the hard times come and the years approach when you will say, "I have no pleasure in them" while the sun and the light and the moon and stars are not darkened, and the clouds do not return after rain, in the days when the guards of the house are frightened and strong men bow down, when grinders stop making flour, because there are few of them, and those looking through windows grow blind, when doors are shut in the streets, and the sounds of mills are muffled, when a man is startled at the sound of a bird, since all music's daughters have died off, when one is afraid of high places and of terrors along the road, when almond trees blossom and locusts grow tired, and desire fails, because man is going to his eternal home and mourners are out in the streets. Remember your Creator before the silver cord is untied or the golden bowl is broken

## 154 Sevench Week or Ordinary Cime

or the pitcher shattered at the spring

or the wheel broken at the well;

because then the dirt will return to the earth as it was,

and the spirit will return to God, who gave it.

"Futility and more than futility," says Qoheleth.

"Everything is futility."

In addition to this, because Qoheleth was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yes, he pondered and investigated and arranged many proverbs. Qoheleth tried to find proper words, and what was written was honest: words of truth. The words of wise men are like spurs, and the words of scholars are like well-driven nails, given by one shepherd. Also, my son, take advice from these. There is no end to the writing of books, and a great deal of wasted effort in a great deal of study.

Let us listen to the conclusion of the whole matter:

Have reverence for God and keep his commandments, because this is all there is for man,

because God will bring everything man does into court,

including everything secret,

whether it is good or evil.

My God, you taught me from the time I was young, and to this day I acknowledge your marvelous deeds. Please do not abandon me in my old age.

Your presence fills me with joy, and eternal pleasures are there beside you. Please do not abandon me in my old age.

#### Second Reading

#### A Commentary on Qoheleth by St. Gregory of Agrigentum

In the words of Qoheleth, "Light is pleasant in itself," and it is a pleasure for the eye to be able to see the sun. A world devoid of light would be without beauty, and life would be lifeless. That was why Moses, who saw God, said in anticipation, "And God saw the light and said that it was good."

But to reflect on the true and eternal light is even more fitting for us. This light is the Prince, who "shines on every man who comes into the world," the savior and redeemer of the world. He is the one who became man and sank to the very depths of the human condition. As David said, "Sing to God a hymn in his name; make a highway for the one who rises in the west. His name is the Master; celebrate him!"

He called this light gratifying and foretold that it would be good to see the sun of glory. In the days of his incarnation, he said, "I am the world's light; anyone who follows me will not walk in darkness, since he will possess the light of life." On another occasion, he said, "This is the verdict: that light has come into the world."

And so sunlight is a symbol. What we see with our eyes foretells the coming of the Sun of Virtue. He was a supremely gratifying light for those who had the privilege of being taught by him personally; he was also a radiance to those who saw him with their physical eyes when he lived on earth as a man among men. It was not just any man they saw, because he was really God. He made the blind see, the lame walk, and the deaf hear; he washed the lepers clean, and by a simple command raised the dead back to life.

And now it is our supreme delight to look on him and contemplate his divine splendor with the eyes of our spirit. When we participate in and associate with that beauty, we are illuminated and adorned, and this is what we take pleasure in. We enjoy being saturated with the pleasantness of the Spirit, in being dressed in holiness, and in achieving wisdom. And finally, we are filled with a joy that comes from God and lasts through all the days of our earthly life. In the wise words of Qoheleth, "A man may live for many years, and he will experience happiness all the days of his life." That is, everyone who gazes on the Sun of Virtue has him as his supreme pleasure. David spoke of these people in this way: "They are to enjoy themselves before God and leap about with happiness." In fact, he even said, "Make the Master your pleasure, virtuous people, because praise comes appropriately from honest folk."

Join me in giving glory to God, and let us praise his name together. Look to him and be radiant with happiness, and never let your faces blush with embarrassment.

God has given us the privilege of sharing the fate of his sacred people in the light; he has set us free from the power of darkness. Look to him and be radiant with happiness, and never let your faces blush with embarrassment.

# 156 Seventh Week of Ordinary Time

## Prayer

Dear Father, please keep before us the wisdom and love you have revealed in your Son, and help us be like him in what we say and do,because he is alive and reigning with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of ages. Amen.



#### First Reading

#### Job 1.1-22

In the land of Uz, there was an irreproachable, honest man named Job, one who respected God and avoided evil. He had seven sons and three daughters, and owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred female donkeys, and a very large household; and so was the greatest of all his people in the east.

His sons used to take turns having parties in their houses, and would invite their three sisters to dine with them. And when the parties were over, Job would send for them and purify them by rising early in the morning and making a holocaust for each of them, since Job said, "It is possible that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts." Job did this regularly.

One day, when the descendants of God, accompanied by Satan, came to present themselves before YHWH, YHWH said to Satan, "Where did you come from?"

"From roaming over the earth and patrolling it," Satan answered.

YHWH said, "Did you notice my slave Job, who has no peer on earth? He is an irreproachable, honest man, who respects God and avoids evil."

And Satan answered, "Does he respect God for nothing? Have you not built a hedge around him and his household and everything he has everywhere? You have blessed everything his hands have done, and his possessions have grown through the land. But if you were to reach out and touch all he has, he would be sure to curse you to your face."

Then YHWH told Satan, "Very well; he is in your power, but do not lay a hand on his person." And Satan left YHWH's presence.

## 158 Cighch Week or Ordinary Cime

One day, when Job's sons and daughters were dining in their oldest brother's house, a messenger came to Job and said, "The oxen were plowing with donkeys grazing beside them, when the Sabeans stole them in a raid; in fact, they slaughtered the slaves with their swords, and I am the only one who escaped to tell you!"

While he was still speaking, another came up and said, "Lightning fell from heaven and burned up the sheep and the slaves completely; and I am the only one to escape and tell you!"

And while he spoke, still another came up and said, "The Chaldeans divided into three gangs, raided the camels and stole them, and killed the slaves with their swords too; and I am the only one who escaped to tell you!"

And while he too was still speaking, another came up and said, "Your sons and daughters were dining in their oldest brother's house, and suddenly a windstorm came across the desert and hit the house on all four sides, and it fell on the young people; and they are dead. I am the only one to escape and tell you!"

Then Job stood up, tore his robe, and cut off his hair. He fell prostrate in worship, and said,

"I came naked from my mother's womb,

and I will go back naked.

The Master gave me these things, and the Master has taken them back. Blessed be YHWH's name."

And in all this, Job did not blame God or accuse him of wrong.

If we accept happiness from God, should we not accept misery too? The Master gives us things, and the Master takes them back; let his will be done. Blessed be the Master's name.

I came naked from my mother's womb, and I will go back naked. The Master gives us things, and the Master takes them back; let his will be done. Blessed be the Master's name.

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

Some men are so innocent that they do not recognize what virtue is; but the more they abandon the innocence of true simplicity, the less they rise to moral excellence, since in not knowing how to guide their actions by correct living, they are to simple to remain innocent.

And so Paul warns his students with these words, "I want you to be wise in what is good, but innocent of evil." Again, he says, "Do not be like children in your thinking; be like infants in evil." And the Truth himself similarly tells his students, "Be wise as snakes and simple as doves." In this command, he has deliberately joined the two ideas together; the snake's cunning compliments the dove's simplicity, and the dove's simplicity moderates the snake's cunning.

This is why the Holy Spirit reveals his presence to human beings not only as a dove but as fire too; the dove represents simplicity, and the fire, intense dedication. And so the dove and the fire, taken together, have a special significance: whoever is filled with the Holy Spirit becomes so dedicated to this gentle simplicity that he is also on fire with the zeal of virtue against the faults of sinners.

"An innocent, honest man is one who respects God and turns away from evil." Whoever is looking for our eternal country obviously lives an innocent, virtuous life. He is innocent in his deeds, honest in his faith; he is innocent in the good actions he performs here on earth, and honest in the high ideals he perceives deep within himself. There are, of course, some who are not simple in this good action, because they are looking for an external reputation, not an inner reward. And so the wise man correctly said, "The sinner who walks the earth along two paths is doomed." Sinners do, in fact, walk over the face of the earth in two directions: externally, their actions seem to be holy, but internally, their thoughts are worldly.

This is a good saying, then: "He respects God and turns away from evil," because the holy Church of the chosen people sets out along the path of simplicity and virtue in fear, but finishes it in love, since it is the Church's task to turn completely away from evil; once she has begun by love of God, she rejects sin. If she still does good only out of frea, she has not inwardly withdrawn from evil, because she commits sin by desiring to sin, if she could only sin without punishment.

And so Job was correctly said to respect God, because he turned away from evil; because love is moved by respect when the mind rejects the thought of sin.

May God give you all the goodness you need to do his will; may he

accomplish in you everything that pleases him through Prince Jesus.

May he open your heart to his law and his regulations; may he accomplish in you everything that pleases him through Prince Jesus.

#### Prayer

Dear Master, please guide the course of world events and give your Church the joy and peace of serving you in freedom. 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

#### Job 2.1-13

Another day when God's descendants came to present themselves before YHWH, Satan also came among them to present himself before YHWH, and YHWH said to Satan, "Where did you come from?"

"From roaming the earth, and patrolling it," answered Satan.

"Did you notice my slave Job?" YHWH asked Satan. "There is no one like him on earth, an innocent, honest man, a man who respects God and avoids evil. And he still holds on to his integrity, even though you egged me on to ruin him for no reason."

Satan replied to YHWH, "Skin for skin! Yes, a man will give everything he has for his life; but reach out now and touch his bones and flesh, and he will be sure to curse you to your face."

And YHWH said to Satan, "Very well, he is in your power; but spare his life."

So Satan left YHWH's presence and struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head; and he took a broken pot to scratch himself while he sat in the ashes. And then his wife told him, "Are you still holding on to that integrity of yours? Curse God and die!"

But he answered her, "You speak like a woman without sense. We accept good things from God; should we not accept bad things?" And in all this Job committed no sin with his lips.

#### Donday

Then, when Job's three friends heard of all these reverses that had come upon him, each came from his own place: Eliphaz from Teman, Bildad from Shuh, and Zophar from Naamath. They met and journeyed together to give him sympathy and comfort; and when they looked up from a distance and did not recognize him, they cried out and wept, and each of them tore his robe and threw dirt down upon his head, and sat down with him on the ground for seven days and seven nights, while no one spoke a word to him, since they saw how enormous his grief was.

Dear God, please do not punish me in your anger; your arrows have pierced right through me. My body is sick because of your indignation.

My friends and neighbors avoid me in my sickness; my body is sick because of your indignation.

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

When Paul saw within himself the riches of internal wisdom, yet was aware of the corruptibility of his own body, he was led to say, "We have this treasure in earthenware pots." Here in blessed Job, the earthenware pot felt the gaping sores in its exterior, while the treasure of wisdom remained whole and intact inside it. That is, outwardly, his body was in agony, but inwardly, from the treasure of wisdom came holy thoughts: "If we have accepted good things from the Master's hand, why should we not endure bad things?" The "good" here refers either to the temporal or the eternal gifts of God, and the "evil" to the disasters of the present time, about which the Master says through the prophet, "I am the Master and there is no other one. I form light and create darkness; I make peace and create harm."

"I form light and create darkness," because though outwardly these disasters create the darkness of anguish, inwardly knowledge lights the light of the mind. "I make peace and create harm," because peace with God is restored to us when what was properly created for us but not ordinarily desired are turned into plagues and become harm for us. It is through sin that we become opposed to God, and so it is fitting for us to return to his peace by way of disasters. In this way, when everything created for good is turned into a source of pain for us, the mind of the punished man can be humbly renewed and restored to peace with his Creator.

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We should take particular note of Job's words to see how skillfully he meets his wife's urging: "If we have accepted good things from God, why should we not accept bad things?" It is a great comfort in suffering if, in times of trouble, we recall the gifts our Creator has given us. And overwhelming pain will not break us if we quickly call to mind the gifts that have sustained us. That is, it is written, "Do not forget hardship in times of prosperity, and in times of hardship, do not forget prosperity." That is, if a man accepts God's gifts, but forgets his hardship, he can fall through his own excess of happiness. On the other hand, when a man is bruised by these whippings, but is not at all consoled by the though of the blessings he has been lucky enough to receive, he is completely devastated.

And so both attitudes have to be united, so that one will support the other: the memory of the gift can temper the pain of hardship, and the dread and fear of hardship can modify the joy of the gift. And so holy Job, to soothe his soul's depression in the midst of his injuries, weighs the pleasurable gifts he has received even while he suffers his whipping, and says, "If we have accepted good things from the Master's hand, why should we not endure bad things?"

If we receive happiness from God, should we not also accept suffering? The Master gives us gifts and the Master takes them back; may his will be done. Blessed be the Master's name.

In all his sufferings, Job did not sin, and did not cast blame upon God. The Master gives us gifts and the Master takes them back; may his will be done. Blessed be the Master's name.

#### Prayer

Dear Master, please guide the course of world events and give your Church the joy and peace of serving you in freedom. 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

Job 3.1-26 After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day he was born. Job began speaking, and said, "I wish the day I was born never existed or the night when they said, 'A boy is born!' Turn that day into darkness! Do not let God above look for it or light shine on it! Have darkness and the shadow of death claim it, and a cloud settle over it. Make the blackness terrify that day and let darkness take over the night; give it no joy among the days of the year, and keep it out of the count of the months! If only that night had been barren, with no joyful shout coming into it! Have those who curse the sea curse that day, those who are there to disturb Leviathan. Darken the stars of its morning; may it look for light and find none, and not see the dawning of the day, because it did not shut the doors of my mother's womb or hide my eyes from agony! Why did I not die at birth? Why did I not end my life as I came from the womb? Why did the knees receive me? Why did I find breasts to nurse? Then I would have lain down and been quiet; I would have been asleep; then I would have been at rest with kings and their advisors over the earth who built for themselves what now are ruinsor with heads of state who had gold

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## 164 Cighch Week or Ordinary Cime

and filled their houses with silver. Why was I not buried like a stillborn child, like infants who never saw light? There, evil people stop causing trouble, and there, the weary are at rest. There, prisoners relax together, and cannot hear the voice of their oppressors. The little ones and the great ones are there, and slaves are free of their masters. Why is light given to those in misery and life to those whose lives are bitter, who long for death that does not come, and search for it more than for a hidden treasure, who are overjoyed and jubilant when they find the grave? Why is light given to those whose paths are hidden, and those whom God has trapped? Sobs come to me in place of food and groaning pour out of me like water, because what I dreaded has happened to me. I have no peace now, no quiet, and no rest, because trouble has taken over."

My sobs have become my food, and my tears pour out of me like streams; everything I am afraid of happens, and whatever I dread comes upon me; and trouble takes over, Master.

I am a man without help, and assistance is beyond my reach; and trouble takes over, Master.

#### Second reading

#### The Confessions of St. Augustine

Master, you know me; please let me know you. Let me come to know you "as well as I am known." You are my soul's strength; please enter it and make it a place that is fit for you to live in, a possession "without any spot or blemish." This is my hope, and the reason I am speaking; I find my happiness in this hope when my happiness is the proper one. As for other things in this life, the less they deserve tears, the more likely they are to be wept over, and the more they deserve tears, the

## Cuesday

less likely people will be to grieve over them. "Yes, you have loved the truth, because the one who does what is true enters light." I want to do what is true only in your eyes by praising you, and in the eyes of many, many others looking on by writing about you.

Master, the depths of a man's conscience are perfectly clear to your eyes. Could anything in me stay hidden, even if I did not want to admit it to you? In that case, I would only be hiding you from myself, not myself from you. But my sobs are enough evidence that I am not satisfied with myself, and that you are my light and the source of my happiness, as well as that you are loved and desired. I am totally ashamed of myself; I have given myself up and chosen you, with the recognition that I cannot please either you or myself unless you make me able to do so.

Whoever I am, Master, I am a book open to your scrutiny. I have already told you about the good it does me when I acknowledge what I am to you; and I do not make my confession with physical words, with physical language; I do so with words in my soul and my mind's cries, which you hear and understand. When I do wrong, my confession to you is an expression of my dissatisfaction with myself; but when I do good, my admissions consist in not ascribing this goodness to myself. That is, "You bless a virtuous man, Master," but first "you make an evil person virtuous." And so I make my confession to you in silence—and yet not in silence; my voice is silent, but my heart cries out.

You are my judge, Master. "Because even though no one knows a man's most intimate thoughts except the man's own interior spirit," there is still something in a man which even his own spirit does not know. But you know all about him, because you made him. In my own case, I despise myself in your sight, since I know that I am nothing but dirt and ashes; and yet I know something about you that I do not know about myself.

True, "we see now indistinctly, as if it were in a darkened mirror, and not yet face to face." And so, as long as I am in exile from you, I am more present to myself than to you; but I do not that you cannot be conquered, while I am not sure which temptations I can resist and which I cannot. Still, I have hope, because you "are faithful and do not let us be tempted beyond our endurance; but you give us the means to withstand the temptation as you give it."

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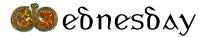
And so I will confess what I know about myself, and also what I do not know. The knowledge that I have of myself I possess because you have given me light, while the knowledge of myself that I do not possess yet will not be mine until my darkness will become like the noonday sun before your face.

Master, you have examined me and you know me; you perceive my thoughts from far off.

Where would I go away from your spirit? Where would I escape from your presence? You perceive my thoughts from far off.

#### Prayer

Dear Master, please guide the course of world events and give your Church the joy and peace of serving you in freedom. 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

Job 7 1-21

Is not man's whole life on earth drudgery? Are not his days like a hired hand's like a slave, who longs for shade or a worker who thinks of nothing but salary. I have been assigned months of futility,

and nights of worry are what I have been given.

When I lie down, I say, "When will I get up

and the night be over?"

Because I have had my fill of tossing and turning till dawn.

My body is caked with worms and dirt,

and my skin is cracking and breaking out.

My days go by more quickly than a weaver's shuttle,

and come to an end with no hope.

Remember that my life is a breath;

## Wednesday

I will never again see anything good. The eyes that are looking at me will not see me any longer; you will look for me, and I will not be there. A man who goes down to the grave does not come up; he is like a cloud that dissipates and is gone. He will never go back to his house, and his place will no longer know him. And so I will not put a rein on my mouth; I will speak out in my spirit's agony; I will complain in my soul's bitterness. Am I the ocean, or some monster in it that you set a guard to watch me? When I say, "my bed will be my comfort, the couch will ease my suffering," you terrify me with dreams and horrify me with visions, so that my soul would rather strangle and die than stay in my body. I loathe my life; I do not want to live forever. Leave me alone, because my days are only a breath. What is man, for you to elevate him, or for you to set your heart on him, for you to visit him every morning and torment him at every moment? How long is it to last? Please, won't you look away from me and let me alone to swallow my saliva? Have I sinned? What have I done to you, you examiner of men? Why have you made me your target, so that I am a burden to myself? Why do you not pardon my guilt and take away the wrong I have done? Because I will now lie down in the dirt and you will look and look for me;

but I will no longer exist.

My body is covered with decay; my skin is cracked and breaking out. Please remember, Master, that my life is a breath.

My life passes as quickly as a weaver's shuttle, and once gone there is no hope of calling it back again. Please remember, Master, that my life is a breath.

#### Second Reading

#### The Confessions of St. Augustine

Where did I find you, so that I came to know you? You were not in my memory before I learned about you. Then where did I find you before I came to know you, if not there inside yourself, far above me? We come to you and we go from you, but there is no place involved in this; you, my Truth, are present to those who are looking for help from you, and at one and the same time you answer everyone, even though they are making different requests.

And you answer clearly; but not everyone hears you clearly. Everyone asks for what he wants, but they do not always hear the answer they want. Your best servant is the one who is interested in choosing whatever he hears from you, rather than in hearing his plea answered.

It was a long time before I loved you, Beauty that is always old, always new; it was a long time before I loved you. You were inside me; it was I who was outside, and there is where I searched for you. In my ugliness, I plunged into the lovely things you created; you were with me, but I was not with you. Created things kept me from you—and yet if they had not been in you, they would not have existed at all.

You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness; you sparkled and shone, and you rid me of my blindness; you breathed your fragrance on me, and I inhaled, and now I am panting for you. I have tasted you, and now I am hungry and thirsty for more; you touched me, and I burned for your peace.

When I am once united to you with my whole being, I will be free at last of suffering and drudgery; and then my life will be alive and filled entirely with you. When you fill someone, you take off his burden; but because I am not filled with you as yet, I am still a burden to myself. My happiness when I should be weeping struggles with my suffering when I should be happy. I do not know where my victory is. I am a wreck!

## Wednesday

Master, please have mercy on me! My evil pains and good pleasures are at war with each other; I do not know where my victory is. I am a wreck! Master, Please have mercy on me. I am a wreck! I am not trying to hide my wounds at all; you are the doctor, and I am the patient. You are merciful, and I need mercy.

"Is not man's life on earth drudgery?" Who would want troubles and difficulties? You command us to put up with them, not to love them; no one loves what he puts up with, though he may love the act of enduring—because, even if he is happy to endure his own burden, he would still rather have the burden not exist. I long for prosperity in times of hardship, and I am afraid of hardship when times are good; and yet what middle ground is there between these two extremes where man's life would be anything but drudgery?

Pity this world's prosperity; pity it a second time and once again, because it corrupts happiness and brings the fear of hardship. Pity this world's hardship; pity it again and then a third time, because it fills people with a yearning for prosperity, and because hardship itself is difficult to bear and can even break their endurance. "Is not man's life on earth drudgery," continuous drudgery?

All my hope rests only on your great mercy.

It was a long time before I loved you, Beauty that is always old, always new; it was a long time before I loved you. You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness.

The Son of Man came to search out the lost and lead them to rescue. You called, you shouted, and you broke through my deafness.

#### Prayer

Dear Master, please guide the course of world events and give your Church the joy and peace of serving you in freedom. 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 Job 11.1-20 Zophar from Naamath spoke up and said, "Shouldn't this torrent of words have an answer? Should a man full of talk win? Should your empty mouthings silence everyone, and when you sneer, should no one take you up? You claim what you teach is pure and that you are clean in God's eyes. Ah, but if God were to speak and open his lips against you for him to show you the secrets of his wisdom, and how they are twice as smart as you. Know that God is demanding from you less than your crimes deserve. Can you penetrate the deep designs of God? Can you set limits for omnipotence? These secrets are higher than heaven. What can you do? They are deeper than the world below. What can you know? They extend farther than the earth and are wider than the ocean. If he comes by and claps you into prison, and condemns you, who can stop him? He knows how deceitful men are. And he sees the evil that is there, and is he not to take it into account? An empty-headed man will be wise when a donkey's colt is born a human being. If you were to straighten out your heart and stretch out your hands to him; if you were to remove all injustice from your hands and would not let evil find a home in your tents, then you could be sure to lift up your immaculate face, and you could be secure, without any fear, because you would forget your misery

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## Chursday

and remember it like water under the bridge;

you life would be as bright as noon,

and any darkness in you would be like the morning;

and you would be secure, because there is hope.

Yes, you would dig out a resting-place and lie down safely,

and you would take your rest, and no one would intimidate you; and many people would be begging for your favor,

while immoral eyes would look on with envy—

and they will find no escape,

and their only hope will be to die."

We are tormented in every way, but not overwhelmed; we are bewildered but do not lose hope. We suffer oppression, but have not been abandoned.

At every moment, we carry in our bodies the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus will be revealed in our bodies too. We suffer oppression, but have not been abandoned.

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

How are we to interpret this law of God? How, if not by love—the love that stamps the regulations of correct living on the mind and demands that we put them into practice. Listen to Truth speak of this law: "This is my commandment: for you to love each other." Listen to Paul: "The whole law," he says, "is summed up in love"; and again, "Help each other in your troubles, and you will fulfill the Prince's law." The Prince's law; does anything other than love describe it better? Yes, we are keeping this law when, out of love, we go to help a brother in trouble.

But we are told that this law is many-faceted. Why? Because love's zealous concern for others is reflected in all the virtues. It begins with two commands, but soon embraces many more. Paul gives a good summary of its various aspects: "Love is patient," he says, "and kind; it is not ambitious, not selfish, not touchy; it does not harbor grudges, and is not happy over others' troubles; it is happy over a good life."

A person ruled by this love shows his patience by putting up with wrongs calmly; he shows his kindness by generously repaying good for evil. Jealousy is something foreign to him; it is impossible to envy worldly

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success when a person has no worldly desires. He is not conceited; the prizes he is aiming for are within him, and outward blessings do not give him pleasure. His conduct is irreproachable, because he cannot do wrong in devoting himself entirely to the love of God and his neighbor.

The welfare of his own soul is what he cares about; apart from that, he has no interest in anything. He is not selfish; since he cannot keep anything he has in this world, he is as indifferent to it as if it belonged to someone else. In fact, in his own eyes, nothing belongs to him except what will always belong to him. He is not touchy; even under provocation, thoughts of revenge never enter his mind. The reward he is looking for after this life will be greater in proportion to what he has to put up with. He harbors no evil thoughts. Hatred is utterly rooted out of a heart whose only love is goodness; thoughts that contaminate a man can find no entry. He does not gloat over other people's harm; an enemy's fall gives him no pleasure, because, in loving everyone, he is anxious for their rescue.

On the other hand, "he finds pleasure in a virtuous life." Since he loves everyone else as much as he loves himself, he takes as much pleasure in whatever good he sees in them as if the progress were his own. That is why the law of God is many-faceted.

Owe no one anything except the debt of love to each other, because anyone who loves his neighbor fulfills the law. Love is the fulfillment of the law.

All God's commandments are summed up in this one: Love your neighbor as much as you love yourself. Love is the fulfillment of the law.

#### Prayer

Dear Master, please guide the course of world events and give your Church the joy and peace of serving you in freedom. 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.

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# Γκιδαυ **ΚΙΔΔΥ**

First Reading Job 12.1-25 Job then spoke, and said, "Of course you are the only people who matter, and wisdom will die with you! But I have intelligence too, and it is not worse than yours. And is there anyone who does not know what you said? Here I am, made fun of by my friends: 'He is the one who calls on God, and he answers, the virtuous, innocent man,'-the one people make fun of! A person resting thinks little of a lamp, which is for people whose feet might slip. Robbers' tents are full of wealth, and those who provoke God are secure in what God's hands bestow on them. But now ask the animals to teach you something, or the birds in the sky, and they will tell youor ask the earth itself to teach you and the fish in the ocean to explain things to you. Is there anything among all of them that does not know that YHWH's hand has done this? Every living thing has its life in his hands, as well as all mankind's breath and spirit. Is the ear not to be judge of words the way the mouth tastes its food? Wisdom belongs to old men, and intelligence comes as the years pass by. He has wisdom and power as his possession, and sage advice and understanding belong to him. If he demolishes something, it cannot be rebuilt; if he imprisons someone, there can be no release. If he holds back the water, streams dry up; if he pours it out, they drown the land. Strength and good judgment belong to him;

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he owns deceivers and those they deceive; he takes advisors away after they are looted, and makes fools of judges. He unties what kings have bound up and leaves only a loincloth on the kings; he sends ministers away with nothing and topples the powerful; he silences advisors and deprives the elders of their discretion; he pours contempt on those in authority and disarms those in power; he reveals what is hidden in darkness and brings the shadow of death to light. He makes nations great and destroys them, he increases their territory and abandons them; he removes understanding from the leaders of the land and makes them wander in a pathless desert; they grope around in the dark, without light, and he makes them stagger about like drunks."

All wisdom and power belong to God, and he own sage advice and understanding. When he destroys something, there is no rebuilding it, and if he imprisons a man, no one can release him.

Once he has decided, no one can change his mind; whatever he determines to do, he does. When he destroys something, there is no rebuilding it, and if he imprisons a man, no one can release him.

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

"If anyone is made fun of by his friends in the way I am, he will call on God, and God will listen to him." A weak-minded person is often distracted toward going after external happiness when the breath of popular favor comes along with his good actions. Then he gives up his own personal choices, and prefers to be at the mercy of whatever he hears from others; and in this way, he is happy at being called fortunate, not so much at being so. Since he is eager to be praised, he gives up what he has begun to be, and so he is cut off from God by the very means by which he seemed to be approved by God.

## TRIDAY

But sometimes a soul steadfastly exerts himself for virtue, and yet is attacked by ridicule from people; he does what is admirable, but only receives derision. He might have gone away from himself because of human praise, but he returns to himself when he is repelled by their abuse. And since he finds to rest outside, he clings more strongly to God within him. All his hope is fixed on his Creator, and among all the ridicule and abuse, he listens only to his interior witness. One who has this kind of trouble grows closer to God the more the turns away from human popularity; he immediately pours himself out in prayer, and because of the pressure from outside, he is refined with a more complete purity to penetrate what is inside him.

In this context, the words apply: "If anyone is made fun of by his friends in the way I am, he will call upon God, and God will listen to him." While immoral people speak disparagingly of virtuous ones, they show them the one they should look to as the witness of their actions. And when it is in this kind of trouble, the soul strengthens itself by prayer; it is united interiorly to the one who listens from high above, precisely because it is cut off externally from the praise of human beings. Again, we should notice how appropriately the words "in the way I am" are inserted. There are some people who are both oppressed by ridicule from human beings and yet are deprived of a favorable hearing from God; because when ridicule comes to a person because of his own sin, it obviously does not produce the merit that is due to virtue.

"A virtuous man's naivete is laughed to scorn." It is the wisdom of this world to conceal the heart with deviousness, to veil one's thoughts with one's words, and to make what is false appear true and what is true appear false. On the other hand, it is the wisdom of virtue never to pretend anything for appearance's sake, and always to use words to express one's thoughts, to love the truth as it is and avoid what is fales, to do what is right without reward and to be more willing to put up with evil than to perpetrate it, not to try to avenge a worng, and to consider as a benefit any insult incurred for truth's sake. But this naivete is sneered at, because the virtue of innocence is considered foolishness by the wise people of this world. Anything that is done out of innocence they are certain to consider stupidity, and whatever truth approves of is in practice called foolishness by their worldly wisdom.

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I hate the ways of falseness. Your words are a lantern which guides my steps; a light for the pathway in front of me.

Master, who will we go to? What you say is eternal life. Your words are a lantern which guides my steps; a light for the pathway in front of me.

#### Prayer

Dear Master, please guide the course of world events and give your Church the joy and peace of serving you in freedom. 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

Job 13.13-14.6

Job answered his friends in this way: "Be quiet and let me speak, and then let come on me what may come! Why do I take my flesh between my teeth and grasp my life in my hands? Even if he slaughters me, I will trust him, but even so, I will defend myself before him. And he will be my rescue, because a hypocrite could not appear before him. So listen carefully to what I have to say and give your ears to what I am asserting, because now I have prepared my case, and know that I will win my suit; if anyone can make a counter-case against me, then I will hold my tongue and die. Only do not do two things to me so that I will not run away from you and hide: Take your hand off me and do not let my dread of you overwhelm me.

## SACURDAY

Then call on me, and I will answer; or let me speak first, and then you answer me. What exactly are the faults and sins I committed? Let me know my crimes and offenses. Why are you hiding your face and treating me as if I were an enemy? Will you persecute a leaf driven back and forth by the wind? Will you go after dry stubble? You draw up bitter indictments against me and punish me for faults back in my youth. You put my feet in the stocks and watch everywhere I walk and dog my every footstep. Man decays like meat rotting, like a moth-eaten piece of clothing. Man who is born from woman has only a few days of life, and they are full of trouble. He blossoms like a flower and then withers, he flits away like a shadow and does not stay. And would you bestow your glance on this kind of thing and bring me up before you to pass judgment on? Who can make an unclean thing clean? No one! Since his time of life has a limit and the number of months he has here is up to you, you have decided his limit, which he cannot pass; so look away from him, and give him rest, so that like a hired man, he can finish his day.

Master, please do not hide your face from me; lift the weight of your hand off me, and do not let dread of you overwhelm me.

Dear God, reprimand me gently, not with anger, because your anger will reduce me to nothing; and do not let dread of you overwhelm me.

Second Reading A Sermon by St. Zeno of Verona Is Job a forerunner of the Prince? If I am right, he is, and the comparison will show the truth of my claim. But though Job was called

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a virtuous man by God, God is himself the source of virtue from whom all the holy people drink. See what Scripture says: "The sun of virtue will rise for you." Job was called truthful, but the Master is, as he says in the Good News, "the way, and truth, and life." And while Job was rich, the Master is far richer, because "the earth belongs to the Master, and so does everything in it, as well as the inhabited world and everyone who lives there." All the rich man are his slaves, and so is the whole world and all of nature.

But we can compare Job and the Prince in many way: Just as Job was tempted by the devil three times, the Prince was also tempted three times. The Master set aside his riches out of love for us, and chose poverty for us to become rich, while Job lost everything he owned. A violent wind killed Job's sons, while the sons of God, the prophets, were killed by the rage of the Pharisees. Job became ulcerated and disfigured, while the Master, by becoming man, took on the defilement of the sins committed by all mankind. The wife of Job tempted him to sin, much as the synagogue tried to force the Master to yield to corrupt leadership. And in this way he was insulted by priests, the servants of his altar, just as Job was insulted by his friends. And just as Job sat on a dunghill full of worms, so all the evil of the world is really a dunghill which became the Master's home, while man that are full of every sort of crime and disgusting desire are really worms.

The restoration of riches and health to Job prefigures the resurrection, which gives health and eternal life to those who believe in the Prince. When he regained mastery over the whole world, the Prince says, "Everything has been given to me by my Father." And just as Job fathered other sons, the Prince did also, because the Emissaries, the sons of the Master, succeeded the prophets.

Job died happily and at peace, but there is no death for the Master. He is being praised forever, just as he was before time began, and he always will be, as time continues and moves into eternity.

Let us remove every encumbrance and run steadily on the race which we started, keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the source of our faith and our goal.

Let us prove ourselves by patient endurance of troubles, in times of difficulty and hardship, and when we are whipped or imprisoned, keeping

## Sacurday

our eyes fixed on Jesus, the source of our faith and its goal.

#### Prayer

Dear Master, please guide the course of world events and give your Church the joy and peace of serving you in freedom. We make this request through our Master, Prince Jesus, your Son, who is alive and right you and the Holy Spirit as one God, through all the ages of gos, Apren.

