

Readings for the Daily Office

Epiphany 5-Last
Year One

an optional second Old Testament reading is provided if an Old Testament reading is desired at both Morning and Evening Prayer or if a longer Office of Readings is desired.

WEEK OF 5 EPIPHANY

SUNDAY 93, 96 ❖ 34

Isa. 57:14-21 - It shall be said, "Build up, build up, prepare the way, remove every obstruction from my people's way."

For thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite.

For I will not continually accuse, nor will I always be angry; for then the spirits would grow faint before me, even the souls that I have made.

Because of their wicked covetousness I was angry; I struck them, I hid and was angry; but they kept turning back to their own ways.

I have seen their ways, but I will heal them; I will lead them and repay them with comfort, creating for their mourners the fruit of the lips.

Peace, peace, to the far and the near, says the LORD; and I will heal them.

But the wicked are like the tossing sea that cannot keep still; its waters toss up mire and mud.

There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked.

Gen. 24:50-67 - Then Laban and Bethuel answered, "The thing comes from the LORD; we cannot speak to you anything bad or good. Look, Rebekah is before you, take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the LORD has spoken."

When Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed himself to the ground before the LORD. And the servant brought out jewelry of silver and of gold, and garments, and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave to her brother and to her mother costly ornaments. Then he and the men who were with him ate and drank, and they spent the night there. When they rose in the morning, he said, "Send me back to my master." Her brother and her mother said, "Let the girl remain with us a while, at least ten days; after that she may go." But he said to them, "Do not delay me, since the LORD has made my journey successful; let me go that I may go to my master." They said, "We will call the girl, and ask her." And they called Rebekah, and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" She said, "I will." So they sent away their sister Rebekah and her nurse along with Abraham's servant and his men. And they blessed Rebekah and said to her, "May you, our sister, become thousands of myriads; may your offspring gain possession of the gates of their foes."

Then Rebekah and her maids rose up, mounted the camels, and followed the man; thus the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

Now Isaac had come from Beer-lahai-roi, and was settled in the Negeb. Isaac went out in the evening to walk in the field; and looking up, he saw camels coming. And Rebekah looked up, and when she saw Isaac, she slipped quickly from the camel, and said to the servant, "Who is the man over there, walking in the field to meet us?" The servant said, "It is my master." So she took her veil and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent. He took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.

Heb. 12:1-6 - Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as

children— “My child, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, or lose heart when you are punished by him;
for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and chastises every child whom he accepts.”

John 7:37-46 - On the last day of the festival, the great day, while Jesus was standing there, he cried out, “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’” Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive; for as yet there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

When they heard these words, some in the crowd said, “This is really the prophet.” Others said, “This is the Messiah.” But some asked, “Surely the Messiah does not come from Galilee, does he? Has not the scripture said that the Messiah is descended from David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?” So there was a division in the crowd because of him. Some of them wanted to arrest him, but no one laid hands on him.

Then the temple police went back to the chief priests and Pharisees, who asked them, “Why did you not arrest him?” The police answered, “Never has anyone spoken like this!”

From an explanation of Paul's letter to the Galatians by Saint Augustine, bishop

Let us understand the workings of God's grace

Paul writes to the Galatians to make them understand that by God’s grace they are no longer under the law. When the Gospel was preached to them, there were some among them of Jewish origin 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. Now God had imposed that burden on those who were slaves to sin and not on servants of justice. That is to say, God had given a just law to unjust men in order to show them their sin, not to take it away. For sin is taken away only by the gift of faith that works through love. The Galatians had already received this gift, but the circumcisers claimed that the Gospel would not save them unless they underwent circumcision and were willing to observe also the other traditional Jewish rites.

The Galatians, therefore, began to question Paul’s preaching of the Gospel because he did not require Gentiles to follow Jewish observances as other apostles had done. Even Peter had yielded to the scandalised protests of the circumcisers. He pretended to believe that the Gospel would not save the Gentiles unless they fulfilled the burden of the law. But Paul recalled him from such dissimulation, as is shown in this very same letter. A similar issue arises in Paul’s letter to the Romans, but with an evident difference. Through his letter to them, Paul was able to resolve the strife and controversy that had developed between the Jewish and Gentile converts.

In the present letter Paul is writing to persons who were profoundly influenced and disturbed by the circumcisers. The Galatians had begun to believe them and to think that Paul had not preached rightly, since he had not ordered them to be circumcised. And so the Apostle begins by saying: I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting him who called you to the glory of Christ, and turning to another gospel.

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 apostle not from men nor by any man, a statement that does not appear in any other letter of his. He is making it quite clear that the circumcisers, for their part, are not from God but from men, and that his authority in preaching the Gospel must be considered equal to that of the other apostles. For he was called to be an apostle not from men nor by any man, but through God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ.

MONDAY 80 ❖ 77, [79]

Isa. 58:1-12 - Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins.

Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God.

“Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?”

Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers.

Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high.

Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,

if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.

The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places, and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.

Gen. 25:19-34 - These are the descendants of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, sister of Laban the Aramean. Isaac prayed to the LORD for his wife, because she was barren; and the LORD granted his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived. The children struggled together within her; and she said, “If it is to be this way, why do I live?” So she went to inquire of the LORD. And the LORD said to her, “Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples born of you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger.”

When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb. The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle; so they named him Esau. Afterward his brother came out, with his hand gripping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them.

When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents. Isaac loved Esau, because he was fond of game; but Rebekah loved Jacob.

Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. Esau said to Jacob, “Let me eat some of that red stuff, for I am famished!” (Therefore he was called Edom.) Jacob said, “First sell me your birthright.” Esau said, “I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?” Jacob said, “Swear to me first.” So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank, and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

Gal. 6:11-18 - See what large letters I make when I am writing in my own hand! It is those who want to make a good showing in the flesh that try to compel you to be circumcised—only that they may not be persecuted for the cross of Christ. Even the circumcised do not themselves obey the law, but they want you to be circumcised so that they may boast about your flesh. May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision nor

uncircumcision is anything; but a new creation is everything! As for those who will follow this rule—peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

From now on, let no one make trouble for me; for I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers and sisters. Amen.

Mark 9:30-41 - They went on from there and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it; for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again." But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

John said to him, "Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us." But Jesus said, "Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. Whoever is not against us is for us. For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.

The 'Breviloquium' of St Bonaventure

From the knowledge of Jesus Christ flows the understanding of the whole of holy Scripture

The stream of holy Scripture flows not from human research but from revelation by God. It springs from *the Father of lights, from whom all fatherhood in heaven and on earth takes its name*. From him, through his Son Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit flows into us; and through the Holy Spirit, giving, at will, different gifts to different people, comes the gift of faith, and through faith Jesus Christ has his dwelling in our hearts. This is the knowledge of Jesus Christ which is the ultimate basis of the solidity and wisdom of the whole of holy Scripture.

From all this it follows that it is impossible for anyone to start to recognise Scripture for what it is if he does not already have faith in Christ infused into him. Christ is the lamp that illuminates the whole of Scripture: he is its gateway and its foundation. For this faith is behind all the supernatural enlightenments that we receive while we are still separated from the Lord and on our pilgrimage. It makes our foundation firm, it directs the light of the lamp, it leads us in through the gateway. It is the standard against which the wisdom that God has given us should be measured, so that *no-one should exaggerate his real importance, but everyone must judge himself soberly by the standard of the faith God has given him*.

The substance and fruit of holy Scripture is very specific: the fullness of eternal happiness. For this is what Scripture is – its words are words of eternal life, and it is written not just so that we should believe, but specially so that we should possess eternal life in which we may see, and love, and have all our desires fulfilled. When they are fulfilled, then we shall know the superabundant love that comes from knowledge, and so we shall be filled with all the fullness of God. God's Scripture tries to lead us to this fullness, and to the truth of the preaching of the apostles. It is to this end, with this intention, that we should study holy Scripture, and teach it, and hear it.

If we are to follow the direct path of Scripture and come straight to the final destination, then right from the beginning – when simple faith starts to draw us towards the light of the Father – our hearts should kneel down and ask the Father to give us, through his Son and the Holy Spirit, true knowledge of Jesus and of his love. Once we know him and love him like this, we shall be made firm in faith and deeply rooted in love, and we can know the

breadth, length, depth and height of holy Scripture. That news can then lead us to the full knowledge and overwhelming love of the most holy Trinity. The desires of the saints draw them towards the Trinity, in which all that is good and true is and finds its completion.

TUESDAY 78:1-39 ❖ 78:40-72

Isa. 59:1-15 - See, the LORD'S hand is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. Rather, your iniquities have been barriers between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.

For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue mutters wickedness.

No one brings suit justly, no one goes to law honestly; they rely on empty pleas, they speak lies, conceiving mischief and begetting iniquity.

They hatch adders' eggs, and weave the spider's web; whoever eats their eggs dies, and the crushed egg hatches out a viper.

Their webs cannot serve as clothing; they cannot cover themselves with what they make.

Their works are works of iniquity, and deeds of violence are in their hands.

Their feet run to evil, and they rush to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity, desolation and destruction are in their highways.

The way of peace they do not know, and there is no justice in their paths. Their roads they have made crooked; no one who walks in them knows peace.

Therefore justice is far from us, and righteousness does not reach us; we wait for light, and lo! there is darkness; and for brightness, but we walk in gloom.

We grope like the blind along a wall, groping like those who have no eyes; we stumble at noon as in the twilight, among the vigorous as though we were dead.

We all growl like bears; like doves we moan mournfully. We wait for justice, but there is none; for salvation, but it is far from us.

For our transgressions before you are many, and our sins testify against us. Our transgressions indeed are with us, and we know our iniquities:

transgressing, and denying the LORD, and turning away from following our God, talking oppression and revolt, conceiving lying words and uttering them from the heart.

Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands at a distance; for truth stumbles in the public square, and uprightness cannot enter.

Truth is lacking, and whoever turns from evil is despoiled. The LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice.

Gen. 26:1-6,12-33 - Now there was a famine in the land, besides the former famine that had occurred in the days of Abraham. And Isaac went to Gerar, to King Abimelech of the Philistines. The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; settle in the land that I shall show you. Reside in this land as an alien, and I will be with you, and will bless you; for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will fulfill the oath that I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, and will give to your offspring all these lands; and all the nations of the earth shall gain blessing for themselves through your offspring, because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."

So Isaac settled in Gerar.

Isaac sowed seed in that land, and in the same year reaped a hundredfold. The LORD blessed him, and the man became rich; he prospered more and more until he became very wealthy. He had possessions of flocks and herds, and a great household, so that the Philistines envied him. (Now the Philistines had stopped up and filled with earth all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the days of his father Abraham.) And Abimelech said to Isaac, "Go away from us; you have become too powerful for us."

So Isaac departed from there and camped in the valley of Gerar and settled there. Isaac dug again the wells of water that had been dug in the days of his father Abraham; for the Philistines had stopped them up after the death of Abraham; and he gave them the names that his father had given them. But when Isaac's servants dug in the valley and found there a

well of spring water, the herders of Gerar quarreled with Isaac's herders, saying, "The water is ours." So he called the well Esek, because they contended with him. Then they dug another well, and they quarreled over that one also; so he called it Sitnah. He moved from there and dug another well, and they did not quarrel over it; so he called it Rehoboth, saying, "Now the LORD has made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land."

From there he went up to Beer-sheba. And that very night the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am the God of your father Abraham; do not be afraid, for I am with you and will bless you and make your offspring numerous for my servant Abraham's sake." So he built an altar there, called on the name of the LORD, and pitched his tent there. And there Isaac's servants dug a well.

Then Abimelech went to him from Gerar, with Ahuzzath his adviser and Phicol the commander of his army. Isaac said to them, "Why have you come to me, seeing that you hate me and have sent me away from you?" They said, "We see plainly that the LORD has been with you; so we say, let there be an oath between you and us, and let us make a covenant with you so that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you and have done to you nothing but good and have sent you away in peace. You are now the blessed of the LORD." So he made them a feast, and they ate and drank. In the morning they rose early and exchanged oaths; and Isaac set them on their way, and they departed from him in peace. That same day Isaac's servants came and told him about the well that they had dug, and said to him, "We have found water!" He called it Shibah; therefore the name of the city is Beer-sheba to this day.

2 Tim. 1:1-14 - Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, for the sake of the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,

To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

I am grateful to God—whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.

Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher, and for this reason I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him. Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

Mark 9:42-50 - "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea. If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than to have two hands and to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than to have two feet and to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into hell, where their worm never dies, and the fire is never quenched.

"For everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

The sacrifice of Abraham

Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering, loaded it on Isaac, and carried in his own hands the fire and the knife. Then the two of them set out together. Isaac himself carries the wood for his own holocaust: this is a figure of Christ. For Christ carried the burden of the cross himself, and yet to carry the wood for the holocaust is really the duty of the priest. So Christ is then both victim and priest. This is the meaning of the expression: *they set out together*. For when Abraham, who was to perform the sacrifice, carried the fire and the knife, Isaac did not walk behind him, but with him. In this way he showed that he exercised the priesthood equally with Abraham.

What happened next? *Isaac spoke to his father Abraham, 'Father' he said. This plea from the son was at that instant the voice of temptation. For do you not think the voice of the son who was about to be sacrificed struck a responsive chord in the heart of the father? Although Abraham did not waver because of his faith, he responded with a voice full of affection: 'Yes, my son' he replied. 'Look,' said Isaac, 'here are the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?' Abraham answered, 'My son, God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering'.*

The careful yet loving response of Abraham moves me greatly. I do not know what he saw in spirit, because he did not speak of the present but of the future: *God himself will provide the lamb*. His son asks what is to happen now, but Abraham's reply concerns the future. Indeed the Lord himself provided a lamb, in Christ.

Abraham stretched out his hand and seized the knife to kill his son. But the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven. 'Abraham, Abraham' he said. 'I am here' Abraham replied. 'Do not raise your hand against the boy' the angel said. 'Do not harm him, for now I know you fear God'. Compare this to what St Paul says when he speaks of God: He did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all. God emulates man with magnificent generosity. Abraham offered to God his mortal son who did not die; God gave up his immortal Son who died for all of us.

Then looking up, Abraham saw a ram caught by its horns in a bush. We said before that Isaac is a type of Christ. Yet this also seems true of the ram. It is worth understanding how both are figures of Christ – Isaac who was not killed and the ram which was. Christ is the Word of God, but the Word became flesh.

Christ therefore suffered, but in the flesh. Christ, the bodily Christ, endured death; and the ram signifies that body and that death. As John said: *Behold the lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world*. The Word, on the other hand, remained incorruptible. This is Christ according to the spirit, and Isaac signifies that spirit. Therefore, Christ himself is both victim and priest according to the spirit. For he offers the victim to the Father according to the flesh, and he is himself offered on the altar of the cross.

WEDNESDAY 119:97-120 ♦ 81, 82

Isa. 59:15-21 - Truth is lacking, and whoever turns from evil is despoiled. The LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice.

He saw that there was no one, and was appalled that there was no one to intervene; so his own arm brought him victory, and his righteousness upheld him.

He put on righteousness like a breastplate, and a helmet of salvation on his head; he put on garments of vengeance for clothing, and wrapped himself in fury as in a mantle.

According to their deeds, so will he repay; wrath to his adversaries, requital to his enemies; to the coastlands he will render requital.

So those in the west shall fear the name of the LORD, and those in the east, his glory; for he will come like a pent-up stream that the wind of the LORD drives on.

And he will come to Zion as Redeemer, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression, says the LORD.

And as for me, this is my covenant with them, says the LORD: my spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of

the mouths of your children, or out of the mouths of your children's children, says the LORD, from now on and forever.

Gen. 27:1-29 - When Isaac was old and his eyes were dim so that he could not see, he called his elder son Esau and said to him, "My son"; and he answered, "Here I am." He said, "See, I am old; I do not know the day of my death. Now then, take your weapons, your quiver and your bow, and go out to the field, and hunt game for me. Then prepare for me savory food, such as I like, and bring it to me to eat, so that I may bless you before I die."

Now Rebekah was listening when Isaac spoke to his son Esau. So when Esau went to the field to hunt for game and bring it, Rebekah said to her son Jacob, "I heard your father say to your brother Esau, 'Bring me game, and prepare for me savory food to eat, that I may bless you before the LORD before I die.' Now therefore, my son, obey my word as I command you. Go to the flock, and get me two choice kids, so that I may prepare from them savory food for your father, such as he likes; and you shall take it to your father to eat, so that he may bless you before he dies." But Jacob said to his mother Rebekah, "Look, my brother Esau is a hairy man, and I am a man of smooth skin. Perhaps my father will feel me, and I shall seem to be mocking him, and bring a curse on myself and not a blessing." His mother said to him, "Let your curse be on me, my son; only obey my word, and go, get them for me." So he went and got them and brought them to his mother; and his mother prepared savory food, such as his father loved. Then Rebekah took the best garments of her elder son Esau, which were with her in the house, and put them on her younger son Jacob; and she put the skins of the kids on his hands and on the smooth part of his neck. Then she handed the savory food, and the bread that she had prepared, to her son Jacob.

So he went in to his father, and said, "My father"; and he said, "Here I am; who are you, my son?" Jacob said to his father, "I am Esau your firstborn. I have done as you told me; now sit up and eat of my game, so that you may bless me." But Isaac said to his son, "How is it that you have found it so quickly, my son?" He answered, "Because the LORD your God granted me success." Then Isaac said to Jacob, "Come near, that I may feel you, my son, to know whether you are really my son Esau or not." So Jacob went up to his father Isaac, who felt him and said, "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau." He did not recognize him, because his hands were hairy like his brother Esau's hands; so he blessed him. He said, "Are you really my son Esau?" He answered, "I am." Then he said, "Bring it to me, that I may eat of my son's game and bless you." So he brought it to him, and he ate; and he brought him wine, and he drank. Then his father Isaac said to him, "Come near and kiss me, my son." So he came near and kissed him; and he smelled the smell of his garments, and blessed him, and said, "Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the LORD has blessed.

May God give you of the dew of heaven, and of the fatness of the earth, and plenty of grain and wine.

Let peoples serve you, and nations bow down to you. Be lord over your brothers, and may your mother's sons bow down to you. Cursed be everyone who curses you, and blessed be everyone who blesses you!"

2 Tim. 1:15—2:13 - You are aware that all who are in Asia have turned away from me, including Phygelus and Hermogenes. May the Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, because he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chain; when he arrived in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me —may the Lord grant that he will find mercy from the Lord on that day! And you know very well how much service he rendered in Ephesus.

You then, my child, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus; and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well. Share in suffering like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving in the army gets entangled in everyday affairs; the soldier's aim is to please the enlisting officer. And in the case of an athlete, no one is crowned without competing according to the rules. It is the farmer who does the work who ought to have the first share of the crops. Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in all things.

Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, a descendant of David—that is my gospel, for which I suffer hardship, even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But the word of God is not chained. Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, so that they may also obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory. The saying is sure: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him; if we deny him, he will also deny us; if we are faithless, he remains faithful—for he cannot deny himself.

Mark 10:1-16 - He left that place and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan. And crowds again gathered around him; and, as was his custom, he again taught them.

Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” He answered them, “What did Moses command you?” They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.” But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

From a letter by Saint Ambrose, bishop

We are heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ

The person who puts to death by the Spirit the deeds of our sinful nature will live, says the Apostle. This is not surprising since one who has the Spirit of God becomes a child of God. So true is it that he is a child of God that he receives not a spirit that enslaves but the Spirit that makes us sons. So much so that the Holy Spirit bears witness to our spirit that we are sons of God. This is the witness of the Holy Spirit: he cries out in our hearts, *Abba, Father*, as we read in the letter to the Galatians.

There is also that other great testimony to the fact that we are sons of God: *we are heirs of God, co-heirs with Christ*. A co-heir of Christ is one who is glorified along with Christ. The one who is glorified along with him is one who, by suffering for him, suffers along with him.

To encourage us in suffering, Paul adds that all our sufferings are small in comparison with the wonderful reward that will be revealed in us; our labours do not deserve the blessings that are to come. We shall be restored to the likeness of God, and counted worthy of seeing him face to face.

He enhances the greatness of the revelation that is to come by adding that creation also looks forward to this revealing of the sons of God. Creation, he says, is at present condemned to frustration, not of its own choice, but it lives in hope. Its hope is in Christ, as it awaits the grace of his ministry; or it hopes that it will share in the glorious freedom of the sons of God and be freed from its bondage to corruption, so that there will be one freedom, shared by creation and by the sons of God when their glory will be revealed.

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

The meaning is clear: those who have the first fruits of the Spirit are groaning in the

expectation of the adoption of sons. This adoption of sons is that of the whole body of creation, when it will be as it were a son of God and see the divine, eternal goodness face to face. The adoption of sons is present in the Church of the Lord when the Spirit calls out: *Abba, Father*, as you read in the letter to the Galatians. But it will be perfect when all who are worthy of seeing the face of God rise in incorruption, in honour and in glory. Then our humanity will know that it has been truly redeemed. So Paul glories in saying: *We are saved by hope*. Hope saves, just as faith does, for of faith it is said: *Your faith has saved you*.

THURSDAY [83] OR 146, 147 ❖ 85, 86

Isa. 60:1-17 - Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.

For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you.

Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.

Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms.

Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.

A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the LORD.

All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered to you, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to you; they shall be acceptable on my altar, and I will glorify my glorious house.

Who are these that fly like a cloud, and like doves to their windows?

For the coastlands shall wait for me, the ships of Tarshish first, to bring your children from far away, their silver and gold with them, for the name of the LORD your God, and for the Holy One of Israel, because he has glorified you.

Foreigners shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you; for in my wrath I struck you down, but in my favor I have had mercy on you.

Your gates shall always be open; day and night they shall not be shut, so that nations shall bring you their wealth, with their kings led in procession.

For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish; those nations shall be utterly laid waste.

The glory of Lebanon shall come to you, the cypress, the plane, and the pine, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will glorify where my feet rest.

The descendants of those who oppressed you shall come bending low to you, and all who despised you shall bow down at your feet; they shall call you the City of the LORD, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel.

Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, with no one passing through, I will make you majestic forever, a joy from age to age.

You shall suck the milk of nations, you shall suck the breasts of kings; and you shall know that I, the LORD, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob.

Instead of bronze I will bring gold, instead of iron I will bring silver; instead of wood, bronze, instead of stones, iron. I will appoint Peace as your overseer and Righteousness as your taskmaster.

Gen. 27:30-45 - As soon as Isaac had finished blessing Jacob, when Jacob had scarcely gone out from the presence of his father Isaac, his brother Esau came in from his hunting. He also prepared savory food, and brought it to his father. And he said to his father, "Let my father sit up and eat of his son's game, so that you may bless me." His father Isaac said to him, "Who are you?" He answered, "I am your firstborn son, Esau." Then Isaac trembled violently, and said, "Who was it then that hunted game and brought it to me, and I ate it all before you came, and I have blessed him?—yes, and blessed he shall be!" When Esau heard his father's words, he cried out with an exceedingly great and bitter cry, and said to his father, "Bless me, me also, father!" But he said, "Your brother came deceitfully,

and he has taken away your blessing.” Esau said, “Is he not rightly named Jacob? For he has supplanted me these two times. He took away my birthright; and look, now he has taken away my blessing.” Then he said, “Have you not reserved a blessing for me?” Isaac answered Esau, “I have already made him your lord, and I have given him all his brothers as servants, and with grain and wine I have sustained him. What then can I do for you, my son?” Esau said to his father, “Have you only one blessing, father? Bless me, me also, father!” And Esau lifted up his voice and wept.

Then his father Isaac answered him: “See, away from the fatness of the earth shall your home be, and away from the dew of heaven on high.

By your sword you shall live, and you shall serve your brother; but when you break loose, you shall break his yoke from your neck.”

Now Esau hated Jacob because of the blessing with which his father had blessed him, and Esau said to himself, “The days of mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob.” But the words of her elder son Esau were told to Rebekah; so she sent and called her younger son Jacob and said to him, “Your brother Esau is consoling himself by planning to kill you. Now therefore, my son, obey my voice; flee at once to my brother Laban in Haran, and stay with him a while, until your brother’s fury turns away— until your brother’s anger against you turns away, and he forgets what you have done to him; then I will send, and bring you back from there. Why should I lose both of you in one day?”

2 Tim. 2:14-26 - Remind them of this, and warn them before God that they are to avoid wrangling over words, which does no good but only ruins those who are listening. Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved by him, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly explaining the word of truth. Avoid profane chatter, for it will lead people into more and more impiety, and their talk will spread like gangrene. Among them are Hymenaeus and Philetus, who have swerved from the truth by claiming that the resurrection has already taken place. They are upsetting the faith of some. But God’s firm foundation stands, bearing this inscription: “The Lord knows those who are his,” and, “Let everyone who calls on the name of the Lord turn away from wickedness.”

In a large house there are utensils not only of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for special use, some for ordinary. All who cleanse themselves of the things I have mentioned will become special utensils, dedicated and useful to the owner of the house, ready for every good work. Shun youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. Have nothing to do with stupid and senseless controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to everyone, an apt teacher, patient, correcting opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth, and that they may escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

Mark 10:17-31 - As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honor your father and mother.’” He said to him, “Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth.” Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, “You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!” And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” They were greatly astounded and said to one another,

“Then who can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible.”

Peter began to say to him, “Look, we have left everything and followed you.” Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first.”

St Augustine's Exposition on Galatians

Let Christ take shape within you

St Paul says, *Be like me* – who, though I was born a Jew, have learnt through spiritual insight to look down on things of the body – *as I have become like you* – that is, I am a man.

Next he very properly reminds them of his love for them, so that they should not think that he is their enemy. *My brethren, hear me: you have never done me harm* – implying, ‘do not therefore think that I mean to do you any harm’.

My children, he adds – so that they should imitate him as they would imitate a parent. *I must go through the pain of giving birth to you all over again, until Christ is formed in you*. Now he speaks more in the person of the Church, their mother, for as he says elsewhere, *I was gentle and unassuming, like a nurse feeding and looking after her children*.

Christ takes shape in a believer through the faith that is in his inmost soul. Such a believer, gentle and humble of heart, is called to the freedom of grace. He does not boast of the merit he gains from good works, for they are worth nothing. It is grace itself that is the beginning of merit, so that Christ, who said *in so far as you did this to one of the least of these, you did it to me* can call the believer the ‘least’ part of himself. Thus Christ is formed within the believer who accepts the form of Christ, who comes close to Christ by means of spiritual love.

Therefore the believer who imitates Christ becomes (as far as he is permitted) the same as Christ whom he imitates. *Whoever claims to abide in Christ, says John, must walk as Christ himself walked*.

Human beings are conceived and given shape by their mothers, and once they have taken shape, their mothers go into labour and give them birth; so we may wonder what is meant by *I must go through the pain of giving birth to you all over again, until Christ is formed in you*. We can take the birth-pangs as meaning the anxiety he felt over them, that they should be born in Christ; or again, that he is suffering because he sees them surrounded by dangers that could lead them astray. The care and worry he feels, which he compares to the pangs of giving birth, may last until they are *fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself, not tossed one way and another and carried along by every wind of doctrine*.

Hence it is not about the beginnings of faith that St Paul is speaking, the faith by which they were born, but about the strengthening and perfecting of that faith: *I must go through the pain of giving birth to you all over again, until Christ is formed in you*. Elsewhere he talks of the same labour in other words: *My anxiety for all the churches. When any man has had scruples, I have had scruples with him; when any man is made to fall, I am tortured*.

FRIDAY 88 ❖ 91, 92

Isa. 61:1-9 - The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners;
to proclaim the year of the LORD'S favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;

to provide for those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory.

They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.

Strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, foreigners shall till your land and dress your vines;

but you shall be called priests of the LORD, you shall be named ministers of our God; you shall enjoy the wealth of the nations, and in their riches you shall glory.

Because their shame was double, and dishonor was proclaimed as their lot, therefore they shall possess a double portion; everlasting joy shall be theirs.

For I the LORD love justice, I hate robbery and wrongdoing; I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them.

Their descendants shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples; all who see them shall acknowledge that they are a people whom the LORD has blessed.

Gen. 27:46-28:4,10-22 - Then Rebekah said to Isaac, “I am weary of my life because of the Hittite women. If Jacob marries one of the Hittite women such as these, one of the women of the land, what good will my life be to me?”

Then Isaac called Jacob and blessed him, and charged him, “You shall not marry one of the Canaanite women. Go at once to Paddan-aram to the house of Bethuel, your mother’s father; and take as wife from there one of the daughters of Laban, your mother’s brother. May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and numerous, that you may become a company of peoples. May he give to you the blessing of Abraham, to you and to your offspring with you, so that you may take possession of the land where you now live as an alien—land that God gave to Abraham.”

Jacob left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And the LORD stood beside him and said, “I am the LORD, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you.” Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place—and I did not know it!” And he was afraid, and said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.”

So Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it. He called that place Bethel; but the name of the city was Luz at the first. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God’s house; and of all that you give me I will surely give one tenth to you.”

2 Tim. 3:1-17 - You must understand this, that in the last days distressing times will come. For people will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, inhuman, implacable, slanderers, profligates, brutes, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to the outward form of godliness but denying its power. Avoid them! For among them are those who make their way into households and captivate silly women, overwhelmed by their sins and swayed by all kinds of desires, who are

always being instructed and can never arrive at a knowledge of the truth. As Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these people, of corrupt mind and counterfeit faith, also oppose the truth. But they will not make much progress, because, as in the case of those two men, their folly will become plain to everyone.

Now you have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love, my steadfastness, my persecutions and suffering the things that happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra. What persecutions I endured! Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. Indeed, all who want to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. But wicked people and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived. But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

Mark 10:32-45 - They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles; they will mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise again."

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." And he said to them, "What is it you want me to do for you?" And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They replied, "We are able." Then Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."

When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. So Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

From a sermon by Saint Leo the Great, pope

Recognise the dignity of your nature

Our Lord Jesus Christ, 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. What mind can grasp this mystery, what tongue can fittingly recount this gift of love? Guilt becomes innocence, old becomes new, strangers are adopted and outsiders are made heirs. Rouse yourself, man, and recognise the dignity of your nature. Remember that you were made in God's image; though corrupted in Adam, that image has been restored in Christ.

Use creatures as they should be used: the earth, the sea, the sky, the air, the springs 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 enlightens every man who comes into this world*. Speaking of this light the prophet said: *Draw close to him and let his light shine upon you and your face will not blush with shame*. If we are indeed 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.

Our words and exhortations are not intended to make you disdain God's works or think there is anything contrary to your faith in creation, for the good God has himself made all things good. What we do ask is that you use reasonably and with moderation all the marvellous creatures which adorn this world; as the Apostle says: *The things that are seen are transient but the things that are unseen are eternal.*

For we are born in the present only to be reborn in the future. Our attachment, therefore, should not be to the transitory; instead, we must be intent upon the eternal. Let us think of how divine grace has transformed our earthly natures so that we may contemplate more closely our heavenly hope. We hear the Apostle say: *You are dead and your life is hidden with Christ in God. But when Christ your life appears, then you will also appear in glory with him, who lives and reigns with the Father and the Holy Spirit for ever and ever. Amen.*

SATURDAY 87, 90 ❖ 136

Isa. 61:10—62:5 - I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my whole being shall exult in my God; for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation, he has covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.

For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her vindication shines out like the dawn, and her salvation like a burning torch.

The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give.

You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

You shall no more be termed Forsaken, and your land shall no more be termed Desolate; but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her, and your land Married; for the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be married.

For as a young man marries a young woman, so shall your builder marry you, and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.

Gen. 29:1-20 - Then Jacob went on his journey, and came to the land of the people of the east. As he looked, he saw a well in the field and three flocks of sheep lying there beside it; for out of that well the flocks were watered. The stone on the well's mouth was large, and when all the flocks were gathered there, the shepherds would roll the stone from the mouth of the well, and water the sheep, and put the stone back in its place on the mouth of the well.

Jacob said to them, "My brothers, where do you come from?" They said, "We are from Haran." He said to them, "Do you know Laban son of Nahor?" They said, "We do." He said to them, "Is it well with him?" "Yes," they replied, "and here is his daughter Rachel, coming with the sheep." He said, "Look, it is still broad daylight; it is not time for the animals to be gathered together. Water the sheep, and go, pasture them." But they said, "We cannot until all the flocks are gathered together, and the stone is rolled from the mouth of the well; then we water the sheep."

While he was still speaking with them, Rachel came with her father's sheep; for she kept them. Now when Jacob saw Rachel, the daughter of his mother's brother Laban, and the sheep of his mother's brother Laban, Jacob went up and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock of his mother's brother Laban. Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and wept aloud. And Jacob told Rachel that he was her father's kinsman, and that he was Rebekah's son; and she ran and told her father.

When Laban heard the news about his sister's son Jacob, he ran to meet him; he embraced him and kissed him, and brought him to his house. Jacob told Laban all these things, and Laban said to him, "Surely you are my bone and my flesh!" And he stayed with him a month.

Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my kinsman, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?" Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah's eyes were lovely, and Rachel was graceful and beautiful. Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter Rachel." Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to any other man; stay with me." So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.

2 Tim. 4:1-8 - In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully.

As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

Mark 10:46-52 - They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again." Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

WEEK OF 6 EPIPHANY

SUNDAY **66, 67** ❖ **19, 46**

Isa. 62:6-12 - Upon your walls, O Jerusalem, I have posted sentinels; all day and all night they shall never be silent. You who remind the LORD, take no rest, and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it renowned throughout the earth.

The LORD has sworn by his right hand and by his mighty arm: I will not again give your grain to be food for your enemies, and foreigners shall not drink the wine for which you have labored;

but those who garner it shall eat it and praise the LORD, and those who gather it shall drink it in my holy courts.

Go through, go through the gates, prepare the way for the people; build up, build up the highway, clear it of stones, lift up an ensign over the peoples.

The LORD has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to daughter Zion, "See, your salvation comes; his reward is with him, and his recompense before him."

They shall be called, "The Holy People, The Redeemed of the LORD"; and you shall be called, "Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken."

Gen. 29:20-35 - So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.

Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife that I may go in to her, for my time is completed." So Laban gathered together all the people of the place, and made a feast. But

in the evening he took his daughter Leah and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her. (Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah to be her maid.) When morning came, it was Leah! And Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?" Laban said, "This is not done in our country—giving the younger before the firstborn. Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also in return for serving me another seven years." Jacob did so, and completed her week; then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel as a wife. (Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel to be her maid.) So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and he loved Rachel more than Leah. He served Laban for another seven years.

When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, he opened her womb; but Rachel was barren. Leah conceived and bore a son, and she named him Reuben; for she said, "Because the LORD has looked on my affliction; surely now my husband will love me." She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Because the LORD has heard that I am hated, he has given me this son also"; and she named him Simeon. Again she conceived and bore a son, and said, "Now this time my husband will be joined to me, because I have borne him three sons"; therefore he was named Levi. She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "This time I will praise the LORD"; therefore she named him Judah; then she ceased bearing.

I John 2:3-11 - Now by this we may be sure that we know him, if we obey his commandments. Whoever says, "I have come to know him," but does not obey his commandments, is a liar, and in such a person the truth does not exist; but whoever obeys his word, truly in this person the love of God has reached perfection. By this we may be sure that we are in him: whoever says, "I abide in him," ought to walk just as he walked.

Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word that you have heard. Yet I am writing you a new commandment that is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. Whoever says, "I am in the light," while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness. Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light, and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates another believer is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and does not know the way to go, because the darkness has brought on blindness.

John 8:12-19 - Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." Then the Pharisees said to him, "You are testifying on your own behalf; your testimony is not valid." Jesus answered, "Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid because I know where I have come from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. You judge by human standards; I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is valid; for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. In your law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is valid. I testify on my own behalf, and the Father who sent me testifies on my behalf." Then they said to him, "Where is your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also."

**From a commentary on the Diatessaron by Saint Ephrem, deacon
God's word is an inexhaustible spring of life**

Lord, who can comprehend even one of your words? We lose more of it than we grasp, like those who drink from a living spring. For God's word offers different facets according to the capacity of the listener, and the Lord has portrayed his message in many colours, so that whoever gazes upon it can see in it what suits him. Within it he has buried manifold treasures, so that each of us might grow rich in seeking them out.

The word of God is 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 wilderness, from which all were offered spiritual drink. As the Apostle says: *They ate spiritual food and they drank spiritual drink.*

And so whenever anyone discovers some part of the treasure, he should not think that he has exhausted God's word. Instead he should feel that this is all that he was able to find of the wealth contained in it. Nor should he say that the word is weak and sterile or look down on it simply because this portion was all that he happened to find. But precisely because he could not capture it all he should give thanks for its riches.

Be glad then that you are overwhelmed, and do not be saddened because he has overcome you. A thirsty man is happy when he is drinking, and he is not depressed because he cannot exhaust the spring. So let this spring quench your thirst, and not your thirst the spring. For if you can satisfy your thirst without exhausting the spring, then when you thirst again you can drink from it once more; but if when your thirst is sated the spring is also dried up, then your victory would turn to harm.

Be thankful then for what you have received, and do not be saddened at all that such an abundance still remains. What you have received and attained is your present share, while what is left will be your heritage. For what you could not take at one time because of your weakness, you will be able to grasp at another if you only persevere. So do not foolishly try to drain in one draught what cannot be consumed all at once, and do not cease out of faintheartedness from what you will be able to absorb as time goes on.

MONDAY 89:1-18 ❖ 89:19-52

Isa. 63:1-6 - "Who is this that comes from Edom, from Bozrah in garments stained crimson? Who is this so splendidly robed, marching in his great might?" "It is I, announcing vindication, mighty to save."

"Why are your robes red, and your garments like theirs who tread the wine press?"

"I have trodden the wine press alone, and from the peoples no one was with me; I trod them in my anger and trampled them in my wrath; their juice splattered on my garments, and stained all my robes.

For the day of vengeance was in my heart, and the year for my redeeming work had come. I looked, but there was no helper; I stared, but there was no one to sustain me; so my own arm brought me victory, and my wrath sustained me.

I trampled down peoples in my anger, I crushed them in my wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth."

Gen. 30:1-24 - When Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she envied her sister; and she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I shall die!" Jacob became very angry with Rachel and said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?" Then she said, "Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, that she may bear upon my knees and that I too may have children through her." So she gave him her maid Bilhah as a wife; and Jacob went in to her. And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. Then Rachel said, "God has judged me, and has also heard my voice and given me a son"; therefore she named him Dan. Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son. Then Rachel said, "With mighty wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and have prevailed"; so she named him Naphtali.

When Leah saw that she had ceased bearing children, she took her maid Zilpah and gave her to Jacob as a wife. Then Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son. And Leah said, "Good fortune!" so she named him Gad. Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son. And Leah said, "Happy am I! For the women will call me happy"; so she named him Asher.

In the days of wheat harvest Reuben went and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes." But she said to her, "Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son's mandrakes also?" Rachel said, "Then he may lie with you tonight for your son's mandrakes." When Jacob came from the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him, and said, "You must come in to me; for I have hired you with my son's mandrakes." So he lay with her that night. And God heeded Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son. Leah said, "God has given me my hire because I gave my maid to

my husband”; so she named him Issachar. And Leah conceived again, and she bore Jacob a sixth son. Then Leah said, “God has endowed me with a good dowry; now my husband will honor me, because I have borne him six sons”; so she named him Zebulun. Afterwards she bore a daughter, and named her Dinah.

Then God remembered Rachel, and God heeded her and opened her womb. She conceived and bore a son, and said, “God has taken away my reproach”; and she named him Joseph, saying, “May the LORD add to me another son!”

I Tim. 1:1-17 - Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope,

To Timothy, my loyal child in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

I urge you, as I did when I was on my way to Macedonia, to remain in Ephesus so that you may instruct certain people not to teach any different doctrine, and not to occupy themselves with myths and endless genealogies that promote speculations rather than the divine training that is known by faith. But the aim of such instruction is love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith. Some people have deviated from these and turned to meaningless talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, without understanding either what they are saying or the things about which they make assertions.

Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it legitimately. This means understanding that the law is laid down not for the innocent but for the lawless and disobedient, for the godless and sinful, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their father or mother, for murderers, fornicators, sodomites, slave traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

I am grateful to Christ Jesus our Lord, who has strengthened me, because he judged me faithful and appointed me to his service, even though I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and a man of violence. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief, and the grace of our Lord overflowed for me with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the foremost. But for that very reason I received mercy, so that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display the utmost patience, making me an example to those who would come to believe in him for eternal life. To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Mark 11:1-11 - When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.’” They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?” They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

On the search for wisdom

Let us work for the food which does not perish – our salvation. Let us work in the vineyard of the Lord to earn our daily wage in the wisdom which says: *Those who work in me will not sin.* Christ tells us: *The field is the world.* Let us work in it and dig up wisdom, its hidden treasure, a treasure we all look for and want to obtain.

If you are looking for it, really look. Be converted and come. Converted from what? From your own wilfulness. "But," you may say, "if I do not find wisdom in my own will, where shall I find it? My soul eagerly desires it. And I will not be satisfied when I find it, if it is not a generous amount, a full measure, overflowing into my hands." You are right, for *blessed is the man who finds wisdom and is full of prudence.*

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 word is near you, in your heart and on your lips,* provided that you seek it honestly. Insofar as you find wisdom in your heart, prudence will flow from your lips, but be careful that it flows from and not away from them, or that you do not vomit 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 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 will be taken away from you, because you gave up searching too soon. While wisdom is near and while it can be found, look for it and ask for its help. Solomon says: *A man who eats too much honey does himself no good; similarly, the man who seeks his own glorification will be crushed by that same renown.*

Happy is the man who has found wisdom. Even more happy is the man who lives in wisdom, for he perceives its abundance. There are three ways for wisdom or prudence to abound in you: if you confess your sins, if you give thanks and praise, and if your speech is edifying. Man believes with his heart and so he is justified. He confesses with his lips and so he is saved. In the beginning of his speech the just man is his own accuser, next he gives glory to God, and thirdly, if his wisdom extends that far, he edifies his neighbour.

TUESDAY 97, 99, [100] ❖ 94, [95]

Isa. 63:7-14 - I will recount the gracious deeds of the LORD, the praiseworthy acts of the LORD, because of all that the LORD has done for us, and the great favor to the house of Israel that he has shown them according to his mercy, according to the abundance of his steadfast love.

For he said, "Surely they are my people, children who will not deal falsely"; and he became their savior

in all their distress. It was no messenger or angel but his presence that saved them; in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

But they rebelled and grieved his holy spirit; therefore he became their enemy; he himself fought against them.

Then they remembered the days of old, of Moses his servant. Where is the one who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of his flock? Where is the one who put within them his holy spirit,

who caused his glorious arm to march at the right hand of Moses, who divided the waters before them to make for himself an everlasting name,

who led them through the depths? Like a horse in the desert, they did not stumble.

Like cattle that go down into the valley, the spirit of the LORD gave them rest. Thus you led your people, to make for yourself a glorious name.

Gen. 31:1-24 - Now Jacob heard that the sons of Laban were saying, “Jacob has taken all that was our father’s; he has gained all this wealth from what belonged to our father.” And Jacob saw that Laban did not regard him as favorably as he did before. Then the LORD said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your ancestors and to your kindred, and I will be with you.” So Jacob sent and called Rachel and Leah into the field where his flock was, and said to them, “I see that your father does not regard me as favorably as he did before. But the God of my father has been with me. You know that I have served your father with all my strength; yet your father has cheated me and changed my wages ten times, but God did not permit him to harm me. If he said, ‘The speckled shall be your wages,’ then all the flock bore speckled; and if he said, ‘The striped shall be your wages,’ then all the flock bore striped. Thus God has taken away the livestock of your father, and given them to me.

During the mating of the flock I once had a dream in which I looked up and saw that the male goats that leaped upon the flock were striped, speckled, and mottled. Then the angel of God said to me in the dream, ‘Jacob,’ and I said, ‘Here I am!’ And he said, ‘Look up and see that all the goats that leap on the flock are striped, speckled, and mottled; for I have seen all that Laban is doing to you. I am the God of Bethel, where you anointed a pillar and made a vow to me. Now leave this land at once and return to the land of your birth.’” Then Rachel and Leah answered him, “Is there any portion or inheritance left to us in our father’s house? Are we not regarded by him as foreigners? For he has sold us, and he has been using up the money given for us. All the property that God has taken away from our father belongs to us and to our children; now then, do whatever God has said to you.”

So Jacob arose, and set his children and his wives on camels; and he drove away all his livestock, all the property that he had gained, the livestock in his possession that he had acquired in Paddan-aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan.

Now Laban had gone to shear his sheep, and Rachel stole her father’s household gods. And Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean, in that he did not tell him that he intended to flee. So he fled with all that he had; starting out he crossed the Euphrates, and set his face toward the hill country of Gilead.

On the third day Laban was told that Jacob had fled. So he took his kinsfolk with him and pursued him for seven days until he caught up with him in the hill country of Gilead. But God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream by night, and

1 Tim. 1:18–2:8 - I am giving you these instructions, Timothy, my child, in accordance with the prophecies made earlier about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, having faith and a good conscience. By rejecting conscience, certain persons have suffered shipwreck in the faith; among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have turned over to Satan, so that they may learn not to blaspheme.

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, who gave himself a ransom for all—this was attested at the right time. For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

I desire, then, that in every place the men should pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument;

Mark 11:12-26 - On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see whether perhaps he would find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. He said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard it.

Then they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling and those who were buying in the temple, and he overturned the tables of

the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves; and he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. He was teaching and saying, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers."

And when the chief priests and the scribes heard it, they kept looking for a way to kill him; for they were afraid of him, because the whole crowd was spellbound by his teaching. And when evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

In the morning as they passed by, they saw the fig tree withered away to its roots. Then Peter remembered and said to him, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that you cursed has withered." Jesus answered them, "Have faith in God. Truly I tell you, if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' and if you do not doubt in your heart, but believe that what you say will come to pass, it will be done for you. So I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

"Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses."

Again they came to Jerusalem. As he was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to him

From the Discourses against the Arians by Saint Athanasius, bishop

We know the Father through creative and incarnate wisdom

The only-begotten Son, the Wisdom of God, created the entire universe. Scripture says: *You have made all things by your wisdom, and the earth is full of your creatures.* Yet simply to be was not enough: God also wanted his creatures to be good. That is why he was pleased that his own wisdom should descend to their level and impress upon each of them singly and upon all of them together a certain resemblance to their Model. It would then be manifest that God's creatures shared in his wisdom and that all his works were worthy of him.

For as the word we speak is an image of the Word who is God's Son, so also is the wisdom implanted in us an image of the Wisdom who is God's Son. It gives us the ability to know and understand and so makes us capable of receiving him who is the all-creative Wisdom, through whom we can come to know the Father. *Whoever has the Son has the Father also*, Scripture says, and *Whoever receives me receives the One who sent me*. And so, since this image of the Wisdom of God has been produced in us and in all creatures, the true and creative Wisdom rightly takes to himself what applies to his image and says: *The Lord created me in his works.*

But because *the World was not wise enough to recognise God in his wisdom*, as we have explained it, *God determined to save those who believe by means of the "foolishness" of the message that we preach.* Not wishing to be known any longer, as in former times, through the mere image and shadow of his wisdom existing in creatures, he caused the true Wisdom himself to take flesh, to become man, and to suffer death on the cross so that all who believed in him might be saved by 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 declares, that Wisdom, who 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 with greater clarity. *Grant, he prayed, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have 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 rejoices in 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.*

Isa 63:15—64:9 - Look down from heaven and see, from your holy and glorious habitation. Where are your zeal and your might? The yearning of your heart and your compassion? They are withheld from me.

For you are our father, though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us; you, O LORD, are our father; our Redeemer from of old is your name. Why, O LORD, do you make us stray from your ways and harden our heart, so that we do not fear you? Turn back for the sake of your servants, for the sake of the tribes that are your heritage.

Your holy people took possession for a little while; but now our adversaries have trampled down your sanctuary.

We have long been like those whom you do not rule, like those not called by your name.

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence—

as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil— to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence!

When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence.

From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him.

You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways. But you were angry, and we sinned; because you hid yourself we transgressed.

We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.

There is no one who calls on your name, or attempts to take hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us, and have delivered us into the hand of our iniquity.

Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.

Do not be exceedingly angry, O LORD, and do not remember iniquity forever. Now consider, we are all your people.

Gen. 31:25-50 - Laban overtook Jacob. Now Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country, and Laban with his kinsfolk camped in the hill country of Gilead. Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done? You have deceived me, and carried away my daughters like captives of the sword. Why did you flee secretly and deceive me and not tell me? I would have sent you away with mirth and songs, with tambourine and lyre. And why did you not permit me to kiss my sons and my daughters farewell? What you have done is foolish. It is in my power to do you harm; but the God of your father spoke to me last night, saying, 'Take heed that you speak to Jacob neither good nor bad.' Even though you had to go because you longed greatly for your father's house, why did you steal my gods?" Jacob answered Laban, "Because I was afraid, for I thought that you would take your daughters from me by force. But anyone with whom you find your gods shall not live. In the presence of our kinsfolk, point out what I have that is yours, and take it." Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the gods.

So Laban went into Jacob's tent, and into Leah's tent, and into the tent of the two maids, but he did not find them. And he went out of Leah's tent, and entered Rachel's. Now Rachel had taken the household gods and put them in the camel's saddle, and sat on them. Laban felt all about in the tent, but did not find them. And she said to her father, "Let not my lord be angry that I cannot rise before you, for the way of women is upon me." So he searched, but did not find the household gods.

Then Jacob became angry, and upbraided Laban. Jacob said to Laban, "What is my offense? What is my sin, that you have hotly pursued me? Although you have felt about through all my goods, what have you found of all your household goods? Set it here before my kinsfolk and your kinsfolk, so that they may decide between us two. These twenty years I have been with you; your ewes and your female goats have not miscarried, and I have not

eaten the rams of your flocks. That which was torn by wild beasts I did not bring to you; I bore the loss of it myself; of my hand you required it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. It was like this with me: by day the heat consumed me, and the cold by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes. These twenty years I have been in your house; I served you fourteen years for your two daughters, and six years for your flock, and you have changed my wages ten times. If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been on my side, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed. God saw my affliction and the labor of my hands, and rebuked you last night.”

Then Laban answered and said to Jacob, “The daughters are my daughters, the children are my children, the flocks are my flocks, and all that you see is mine. But what can I do today about these daughters of mine, or about their children whom they have borne? Come now, let us make a covenant, you and I; and let it be a witness between you and me.” So Jacob took a stone, and set it up as a pillar. And Jacob said to his kinsfolk, “Gather stones,” and they took stones, and made a heap; and they ate there by the heap. Laban called it Jegar-sahadutha: but Jacob called it Galeed. Laban said, “This heap is a witness between you and me today.” Therefore he called it Galeed, and the pillar Mizpah, for he said, “The LORD watch between you and me, when we are absent one from the other. If you ill-treat my daughters, or if you take wives in addition to my daughters, though no one else is with us, remember that God is witness between you and me.”

1 Tim. 3:1-16 - The saying is sure: whoever aspires to the office of bishop desires a noble task. Now a bishop must be above reproach, married only once, temperate, sensible, respectable, hospitable, an apt teacher, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way—for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how can he take care of God’s church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace and the snare of the devil.

Deacons likewise must be serious, not double-tongued, not indulging in much wine, not greedy for money; they must hold fast to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them first be tested; then, if they prove themselves blameless, let them serve as deacons. Women likewise must be serious, not slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things. Let deacons be married only once, and let them manage their children and their households well; for those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these instructions to you so that, if I am delayed, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth. Without any doubt, the mystery of our religion is great: He was revealed in flesh, vindicated in spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among Gentiles, believed in throughout the world, taken up in glory.

Mark 11:27–12:12 - Again they came to Jerusalem. As he was walking in the temple, the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders came to him and said, “By what authority are you doing these things? Who gave you this authority to do them?” Jesus said to them, “I will ask you one question; answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things. Did the baptism of John come from heaven, or was it of human origin? Answer me.” They argued with one another, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will say, ‘Why then did you not believe him?’ But shall we say, ‘Of human origin?’”—they were afraid of the crowd, for all regarded John as truly a prophet. So they answered Jesus, “We do not know.” And Jesus said to them, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”

Then he began to speak to them in parables. “A man planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a pit for the wine press, and built a watchtower; then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. When the season came, he sent a slave to the tenants to collect from them his share of the produce of the vineyard. But they seized him, and beat him, and sent him away empty-handed. And again he sent another slave to them; this one they beat

over the head and insulted. Then he sent another, and that one they killed. And so it was with many others; some they beat, and others they killed. He had still one other, a beloved son. Finally he sent him to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But those tenants said to one another, 'This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' So they seized him, killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard. What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy the tenants and give the vineyard to others. Have you not read this scripture: 'The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;

this was the Lord's doing, and it is amazing in our eyes'?"

When they realized that he had told this parable against them, they wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowd. So they left him and went away.

The commentary on Proverbs by Procopius of Gaza

The Wisdom of God has mixed wine for us and set up a feast

Wisdom has built herself a house. God the Father's Power, himself a person, has fashioned as his dwelling-place the whole world, in which he lives by his activity; and has fashioned man also, who was created to resemble God's own image and likeness and has a nature which is partly seen and partly hidden from our eyes.

And she has set up seven pillars. To man, who was made in the image of Christ when the rest of creation was completed, Wisdom gave the seven gifts of the Spirit to enable him to believe in Christ and to keep his commandments. By means of these gifts, strength is stimulated by knowledge and knowledge is reflected in strength until the spiritual man is brought to completion, solidly founded on firm faith and on the supernatural graces in which he shares.

His nature is made more glorious by strength, by good counsel, and by prudence. Strength brings a desire to seek out all manifestations of the divine will through which all things were made. Good counsel distinguishes what is God's will from what is not and leads him to ponder, to proclaim and to fulfil the will of God. Prudence, finally, leads him to turn towards the will of God and not to other things.

She has mingled her wine in a bowl and spread her table. Because the Word of God has mingled in man, as in a bowl, a spiritual and a physical nature and has given him a knowledge both of creation and of himself as the Creator, it is natural for the things of God to have on man's mind the inebriating effect of wine. Christ himself, the bread from heaven, is his nourishment enabling him to grow in virtue, and it is Christ who quenches his thirst and gladdens him with his teaching. For all who desire to share in it, he has prepared this rich banquet, this spiritual feast.

She has sent forth her servants with the sublime message that all are to come to the bowl and drink. Christ has sent forth his apostles, the servants of his divine will, to proclaim the message of the Gospel which, because it comes from the Spirit, transcends both the natural and the written law. By this he calls us to himself: in him, as in a bowl, there was brought about by the mystery of the incarnation a marvelous mingling of the divine and human natures, although each still remains distinct. And through the apostles he cries out: *Is anyone foolish? Let him turn to me.* If anyone is so foolish as to think in his heart that there is no God, let him renounce his disbelief and turn to me by faith. Let him know that I am the maker of all things and their Lord.

And to those who lack wisdom he says: Come, eat my bread and drink the wine that I have prepared for you. To those who still lack the works of faith and the higher knowledge which inspires them he says 'Come, eat my body, the bread that is the nourishment of virtue, and drink my blood, the wine that cheers you with the joy of true knowledge and makes you divine. For I have miraculously mingled my divinity with my blood for your salvation.'

Isa. 65:1-12 - I was ready to be sought out by those who did not ask, to be found by those who did not seek me. I said, "Here I am, here I am," to a nation that did not call on my name.

I held out my hands all day long to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices;

a people who provoke me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens and offering incense on bricks;

who sit inside tombs, and spend the night in secret places; who eat swine's flesh, with broth of abominable things in their vessels;

who say, "Keep to yourself, do not come near me, for I am too holy for you." These are a smoke in my nostrils, a fire that burns all day long.

See, it is written before me: I will not keep silent, but I will repay; I will indeed repay into their laps

their iniquities and their ancestors' iniquities together, says the LORD; because they offered incense on the mountains and reviled me on the hills, I will measure into their laps full payment for their actions.

Thus says the LORD: As the wine is found in the cluster, and they say, "Do not destroy it, for there is a blessing in it," so I will do for my servants' sake, and not destroy them all.

I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, and from Judah inheritors of my mountains; my chosen shall inherit it, and my servants shall settle there.

Sharon shall become a pasture for flocks, and the Valley of Achor a place for herds to lie down, for my people who have sought me.

But you who forsake the LORD, who forget my holy mountain, who set a table for Fortune and fill cups of mixed wine for Destiny;

I will destine you to the sword, and all of you shall bow down to the slaughter; because, when I called, you did not answer, when I spoke, you did not listen, but you did what was evil in my sight, and chose what I did not delight in.

Gen. 32:3-21 - Jacob sent messengers before him to his brother Esau in the land of Seir, the country of Edom, instructing them, "Thus you shall say to my lord Esau: Thus says your servant Jacob, 'I have lived with Laban as an alien, and stayed until now; and I have oxen, donkeys, flocks, male and female slaves; and I have sent to tell my lord, in order that I may find favor in your sight.'"

The messengers returned to Jacob, saying, "We came to your brother Esau, and he is coming to meet you, and four hundred men are with him." Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies, thinking, "If Esau comes to the one company and destroys it, then the company that is left will escape."

And Jacob said, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, O LORD who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your kindred, and I will do you good,' I am not worthy of the least of all the steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan; and now I have become two companies. Deliver me, please, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau, for I am afraid of him; he may come and kill us all, the mothers with the children. Yet you have said, 'I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted because of their number.'"

So he spent that night there, and from what he had with him he took a present for his brother Esau, two hundred female goats and twenty male goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams, thirty milch camels and their colts, forty cows and ten bulls, twenty female donkeys and ten male donkeys. These he delivered into the hand of his servants, every drove by itself, and said to his servants, "Pass on ahead of me, and put a space between drove and drove." He instructed the foremost, "When Esau my brother meets you, and asks you, 'To whom do you belong? Where are you going? And whose are these ahead of you?' then you shall say, 'They belong to your servant Jacob; they are a present sent to my lord

Esau; and moreover he is behind us.” He likewise instructed the second and the third and all who followed the droves, “You shall say the same thing to Esau when you meet him, and you shall say, ‘Moreover your servant Jacob is behind us.’” For he thought, “I may appease him with the present that goes ahead of me, and afterwards I shall see his face; perhaps he will accept me.” So the present passed on ahead of him; and he himself spent that night in the camp.

1 Tim. 4:1-16 - Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will renounce the faith by paying attention to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons, through the hypocrisy of liars whose consciences are seared with a hot iron. They forbid marriage and demand abstinence from foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected, provided it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by God’s word and by prayer.

If you put these instructions before the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound teaching that you have followed. Have nothing to do with profane myths and old wives’ tales. Train yourself in godliness, for, while physical training is of some value, godliness is valuable in every way, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance. For to this end we toil and struggle, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

These are the things you must insist on and teach. Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I arrive, give attention to the public reading of scripture, to exhorting, to teaching. Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you through prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders. Put these things into practice, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Mark 12:13-27 - Then they sent to him some Pharisees and some Herodians to trap him in what he said. And they came and said to him, “Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality, but teach the way of God in accordance with truth. Is it lawful to pay taxes to the emperor, or not? Should we pay them, or should we not?” But knowing their hypocrisy, he said to them, “Why are you putting me to the test? Bring me a denarius and let me see it.” And they brought one. Then he said to them, “Whose head is this, and whose title?” They answered, “The emperor’s.” Jesus said to them, “Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they were utterly amazed at him.

Some Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him and asked him a question, saying, “Teacher, Moses wrote for us that ‘if a man’s brother dies, leaving a wife but no child, the man shall marry the widow and raise up children for his brother.’ There were seven brothers; the first married and, when he died, left no children; and the second married her and died, leaving no children; and the third likewise; none of the seven left children. Last of all the woman herself died. In the resurrection whose wife will she be? For the seven had married her.”

Jesus said to them, “Is not this the reason you are wrong, that you know neither the scriptures nor the power of God? For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven. And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the story about the bush, how God said to him, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’? He is God not of the dead, but of the living; you are quite wrong.”

From the Explanations of the Psalms by Saint Ambrose, bishop
Open your lips, and let God's word be heard

We must always meditate on God's wisdom, keeping it in our hearts and on our lips. Your tongue must speak justice, the law of God must be in your heart. Hence Scripture tells you: You shall speak of these commandments when you sit in your house, and when you walk along the way, and when you lie down, and when you get up. Let us then speak of the Lord Jesus, for he is wisdom, he is the word, the Word indeed 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 Christ's teaching and meditate on his sayings. Let us always speak this word. When we speak about wisdom, we are speaking of Christ. When we speak about virtue, we are speaking of Christ. When we speak about justice, we are speaking of Christ. When we speak about peace, we are speaking of Christ. When we speak about truth and life and redemption, we are speaking of Christ.

Open your lips, says Scripture, and let God's word be heard. It is for you to open, it is for him to be heard. So David said: I shall hear what the Lord says in me. The very Son of God says: Open your lips, and I will fill them. Not all can attain to the perfection of wisdom as Solomon or Daniel did, but the spirit of wisdom is poured out on all according to their capacity, that is, on all the faithful. If you believe, you have the spirit of wisdom.

Meditate, then, at all times on the things of God, and speak the things of God, when you sit in your house. By house we can understand the Church, or the secret place within us, so that we are to speak within ourselves. Speak with prudence, so as to avoid falling into sin, as by excess of talking. When you sit in your house, speak to yourself as if you were a judge. When you walk along the way, speak, so as never to be idle. You speak along the way if you speak in Christ, for Christ is the way. When you walk along the way, speak to yourself, speak to Christ. Hear him say to you: I desire that in every place men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarrelling. When you lie down, speak so that the sleep of death may not steal upon you. Listen and learn how you are to speak as you lie down; I will not give sleep to my eyes or slumber to my eyelids until I find a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the God of Jacob.

When you get up or rise again, speak of Christ, so as to fulfil what you are commanded. Listen and learn how Christ is to awaken you from sleep. Your soul says: I hear my brother knocking at the door. Then Christ says to you: Open the door to me, my sister, my spouse. Listen and learn how you are to awaken Christ. Your soul says: I charge you, daughters of Jerusalem, awaken or reawaken the love of my heart. Christ is that love.

FRIDAY 102 ❖ 107:1-32

Isa. 65:13-25 - Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: My servants shall eat, but you shall be hungry; my servants shall drink, but you shall be thirsty; my servants shall rejoice, but you shall be put to shame; my servants shall sing for gladness of heart, but you shall cry out for pain of heart, and shall wail for anguish of spirit.

You shall leave your name to my chosen to use as a curse, and the Lord GOD will put you to death; but to his servants he will give a different name.

Then whoever invokes a blessing in the land shall bless by the God of faithfulness, and whoever takes an oath in the land shall swear by the God of faithfulness; because the former troubles are forgotten and are hidden from my sight.

For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.

But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight.

I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress.

No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed.

They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the LORD— and their descendants as well.

Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear.

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent—its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the LORD.

Gen. 32:22-33:17 - The same night he got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed." Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved." The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip. Therefore to this day the Israelites do not eat the thigh muscle that is on the hip socket, because he struck Jacob on the hip socket at the thigh muscle.

Now Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming, and four hundred men with him. So he divided the children among Leah and Rachel and the two maids. He put the maids with their children in front, then Leah with her children, and Rachel and Joseph last of all. He himself went on ahead of them, bowing himself to the ground seven times, until he came near his brother.

But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept. When Esau looked up and saw the women and children, he said, "Who are these with you?" Jacob said, "The children whom God has graciously given your servant." Then the maids drew near, they and their children, and bowed down; Leah likewise and her children drew near and bowed down; and finally Joseph and Rachel drew near, and they bowed down. Esau said, "What do you mean by all this company that I met?" Jacob answered, "To find favor with my lord." But Esau said, "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself." Jacob said, "No, please; if I find favor with you, then accept my present from my hand; for truly to see your face is like seeing the face of God—since you have received me with such favor. Please accept my gift that is brought to you, because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have everything I want." So he urged him, and he took it.

Then Esau said, "Let us journey on our way, and I will go alongside you." But Jacob said to him, "My lord knows that the children are frail and that the flocks and herds, which are nursing, are a care to me; and if they are overdriven for one day, all the flocks will die. Let my lord pass on ahead of his servant, and I will lead on slowly, according to the pace of the cattle that are before me and according to the pace of the children, until I come to my lord in Seir."

So Esau said, "Let me leave with you some of the people who are with me." But he said, "Why should my lord be so kind to me?" So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. But

Jacob journeyed to Succoth, and built himself a house, and made booths for his cattle; therefore the place is called Succoth.

I Tim 5:17-25 - Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching; for the scripture says, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain," and, "The laborer deserves to be paid." Never accept any accusation against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses. As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest also may stand in fear. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels, I warn you to keep these instructions without prejudice, doing nothing on the basis of partiality. Do not ordain anyone hastily, and do not participate in the sins of others; keep yourself pure.

No longer drink only water, but take a little wine for the sake of your stomach and your frequent ailments.

The sins of some people are conspicuous and precede them to judgment, while the sins of others follow them there. So also good works are conspicuous; and even when they are not, they cannot remain hidden.

Mark 12:28-34 - One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, "Which commandment is the first of all?" Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these." Then the scribe said to him, "You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that 'he is one, and besides him there is no other'; and 'to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,' and 'to love one's neighbor as oneself,'—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." After that no one dared to ask him any question.

From the Tractates on the first letter of John by Saint Augustine, bishop

Our heart longs for God

We have been promised that we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. By these words, the tongue has done its best; now we must apply the meditation of the heart. Although they are the words of Saint John, what are they in comparison with the divine reality? And how can we, so greatly inferior to John in merit, add anything of our own? Yet we have received, as John has told us, an anointing by the Holy One which teaches us inwardly more than our tongue can speak. Let us turn to this source of knowledge, and because at present you cannot see, make it your business to desire the divine vision.

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

Suppose you are going to fill some holder or container, and you know you will be given a large amount. Then you set about stretching your sack or wineskin or whatever it is. Why? Because you know the quantity you will have to put in it and your eyes tell you there is not enough room. By stretching it, therefore, you increase the capacity 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.

So, my brethren, let us continue to desire, for we shall be filled. Take note of Saint Paul stretching as it were his ability to receive what is to come: Not that I have already obtained this, he said, or am made perfect. Brethren, I do not consider that I have already obtained it. We might ask him, "If you have not yet obtained it, what are you doing in this life?" This

one thing I do, answers Paul, forgetting what lies behind, and stretching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the prize to which I am called in the life above. Not only did Paul say he stretched forward, but he also declared that he pressed on toward a chosen goal. He realised in fact that he was still short of receiving what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived.

Such is our Christian life. By desiring heaven we exercise the powers of our soul. Now this exercise will be effective only to the extent that we free ourselves from desires leading to infatuation with this world. Let me return to the example I have already used, of filling an empty container. God means to fill each of you with what is good; so cast out what is bad! If he wishes to fill you with honey and you are full of sour wine, where is the honey to go? The vessel must be emptied of its contents and then be cleansed. Yes, it must be cleansed even if you have to work hard and scour it. It must be made fit for the new thing, whatever it may be.

We may go on speaking figuratively of honey, gold or wine – but whatever we say we cannot express the reality we are to receive. The name of that reality is God. But who will claim that in that one syllable we utter the full expanse of our heart's desire? Therefore, whatever we say is necessarily less than the full truth. We must extend ourselves toward the measure of Christ so that when he comes he may fill us with his presence. Then we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.

SATURDAY 107:33-43, 108:1-6(7-13) ❖ 33

Isa. 66:1-6 - Thus says the LORD: Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is my resting place?

All these things my hand has made, and so all these things are mine, says the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look, to the humble and contrite in spirit, who trembles at my word.

Whoever slaughters an ox is like one who kills a human being; whoever sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck; whoever presents a grain offering, like one who offers swine's blood; whoever makes a memorial offering of frankincense, like one who blesses an idol. These have chosen their own ways, and in their abominations they take delight; I also will choose to mock them, and bring upon them what they fear; because, when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, they did not listen; but they did what was evil in my sight, and chose what did not please me.

Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at his word: Your own people who hate you and reject you for my name's sake have said, "Let the LORD be glorified, so that we may see your joy"; but it is they who shall be put to shame.

Listen, an uproar from the city! A voice from the temple! The voice of the LORD, dealing retribution to his enemies!

Gen. 35:1-20 - God said to Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and settle there. Make an altar there to the God who appeared to you when you fled from your brother Esau." So Jacob said to his household and to all who were with him, "Put away the foreign gods that are among you, and purify yourselves, and change your clothes; then come, let us go up to Bethel, that I may make an altar there to the God who answered me in the day of my distress and has been with me wherever I have gone." So they gave to Jacob all the foreign gods that they had, and the rings that were in their ears; and Jacob hid them under the oak that was near Shechem.

As they journeyed, a terror from God fell upon the cities all around them, so that no one pursued them. Jacob came to Luz (that is, Bethel), which is in the land of Canaan, he and all the people who were with him, and there he built an altar and called the place El-bethel, because it was there that God had revealed himself to him when he fled from his brother. And Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died, and she was buried under an oak below Bethel. So it was called Allon-bacuth.

God appeared to Jacob again when he came from Paddan-aram, and he blessed him. God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; no longer shall you be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name." So he was called Israel. God said to him, "I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall spring from you. The land that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring after you." Then God went up from him at the place where he had spoken with him. Jacob set up a pillar in the place where he had spoken with him, a pillar of stone; and he poured out a drink offering on it, and poured oil on it. So Jacob called the place where God had spoken with him Bethel.

Then they journeyed from Bethel; and when they were still some distance from Ephrath, Rachel was in childbirth, and she had hard labor. When she was in her hard labor, the midwife said to her, "Do not be afraid; for now you will have another son." As her soul was departing (for she died), she named him Ben-oni; but his father called him Benjamin. So Rachel died, and she was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem), and Jacob set up a pillar at her grave; it is the pillar of Rachel's tomb, which is there to this day.

1 Tim. 6:6-21 - Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will bring about at the right time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords. It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.

Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the profane chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge; by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith. Grace be with you.

Mark 12:35-44 - While Jesus was teaching in the temple, he said, "How can the scribes say that the Messiah is the son of David? David himself, by the Holy Spirit, declared, 'The Lord said to my Lord, "Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet.'" David himself calls him Lord; so how can he be his son?" And the large crowd was listening to him with delight.

As he taught, he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to

the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

An address by Pope Pius XII to newly married couples

The wife - the radiant sun of the family

The family is illuminated by its own radiant sun, which is the wife. Of her Scripture says, with feeling:

The grace of a wife will charm her husband,
her accomplishments will make him the stronger.

A silent wife is a gift from the Lord,
no price can be put on a well-trained character.

A modest wife is a boon twice over,
a chaste character cannot be weighed on scales.

Like the sun rising over the mountains of the Lord
is the beauty of a good wife in a well-kept house.

The wife and mother is indeed like the sun shining in the family. She shines by her generosity and the way she gives herself to others. She shines by her alertness and watchfulness and by her wise and gentle providing of all that can give joy to her husband and children. She radiates light and warmth.

A marriage will prosper if each partner goes into it not for his own happiness but the other's happiness – but although it belongs to both partners, this emotion, this goal is particularly a quality of the woman. Her very nature as a mother entails it. Her wisdom and prudence mean that even if she encounters troubles she will respond to them with joy; if she is belittled, she will respond with unaltered dignity and respect. She is like the sun that brightens a cloudy morning with the dawn; the sun that illuminates the shower-clouds at dusk.

The wife is like the sun shining in the family with the brightness of her glance and the ardour of her speech. Her looks and words enter into the souls of her family, softening them, touching them, raising them up from the tumult of emotion. They recall her husband to joy in good things and delight in family life after his uninterrupted and often heavy work of the day, whether in an office, in the fields, in trade or in industry.

The wife is like the sun shining in the family by her unforced, transparent sincerity, by her simple dignity, by her decent Christian behaviour; by her inward thoughts and her upright heart; and also by the appropriateness of her dress and bearing, adorned by her open and honest way of life. Subtle signs of feeling, shades of expression, silences and unmalicious smiles, little nods of approval – all these give her the grace of an exquisite but simple flower opening its petals to reflect the colours of sunlight.

If only you could know the full depth of the feelings of love and gratitude that such a perfect wife and mother inspires in her husband and children!

WEEK OF 7 EPIPHANY

SUNDAY 118 ❖ 145

Isa. 66:7-14 - Before she was in labor she gave birth; before her pain came upon her she delivered a son.

Who has heard of such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be delivered in one moment? Yet as soon as Zion was in labor she delivered her children.

Shall I open the womb and not deliver? says the LORD; shall I, the one who delivers, shut the womb? says your God.

Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her—

that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast; that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious bosom.

For thus says the LORD: I will extend prosperity to her like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall nurse and be carried on her arm, and dandled on her knees.

As a mother comforts her child, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice; your bodies shall flourish like the grass; and it shall be known that the hand of the LORD is with his servants, and his indignation is against his enemies.

Prov. 1:20-33 - Wisdom cries out in the street; in the squares she raises her voice.

At the busiest corner she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:

“How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge?

Give heed to my reproof; I will pour out my thoughts to you; I will make my words known to you.

Because I have called and you refused, have stretched out my hand and no one heeded, and because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof,

I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when panic strikes you, when panic strikes you like a storm, and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you.

Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but will not find me.

Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD, would have none of my counsel, and despised all my reproof,

therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way and be sated with their own devices.

For waywardness kills the simple, and the complacency of fools destroys them; but those who listen to me will be secure and will live at ease, without dread of disaster.”

1 John 3:4-10 - Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. Everyone who commits sin is a child of the devil; for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil. Those who have been born of God do not sin, because God's seed abides in them; they cannot sin, because they have been born of God. The children of God and the children of the devil are revealed in this way: all who do not do what is right are not from God, nor are those who do not love their brothers and sisters.

John 10:7-16 - So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand, who is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and runs away—and the wolf snatches them and scatters them. The hired hand runs away because a hired hand does not care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father. And I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd.

Without love everything is in vain

Charity is a right attitude of mind which prefers nothing to the knowledge of God. If a man possesses any strong attachment to the things of this earth, he cannot possess true charity. For anyone who really loves God prefers to know and experience God rather than his creatures. The whole set and longing of his mind is ever directed toward him.

For 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 author of creation, less than creation itself.

The Lord himself reminds us: *Whoever loves me will keep my commandments. And this is my commandment: that you love one another.* So the man who does not love his neighbour does not obey God's command. But one who does not obey his command cannot love God. A man is blessed if he can love all men equally. Moreover, if he truly loves God, he must love his neighbour absolutely. Such a man cannot hoard his wealth. Rather, like God himself, he generously gives from his own resources to each man according to his needs.

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 just man and one who is unjust. Yet his own goodness of will makes him prefer the man who strives after virtue to the one who is depraved.

A charitable mind is not displayed simply in giving money; it is manifested still more by personal service as well as by the communication of God's word 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. For 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 Lord his God. Rather, following the prophet Jeremiah, he withstands every type of reproach and hardship without even harbouring an evil thought toward any man.

For Jeremiah warns us: *Do not say: "We are the Lord's temple."* Neither should you say: "Faith alone in our Lord Jesus Christ can save me." By itself faith accomplishes nothing. *For even the devils believe and shudder.*

No, faith must be joined to an active love of God which is expressed in good works. The charitable man is distinguished by sincere and long-suffering service to his fellow man: it also means using things aright.

MONDAY 106:1-18 ❖ 106:19-48

Ruth 1:1-14 - In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to live in the country of Moab, he and his wife and two sons. The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion; they were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. When they had lived there about ten years, both Mahlon and Chilion also died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.

Then she started to return with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the LORD had considered his people and given them food. So she set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah. But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the LORD deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me. The LORD grant

that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband.” Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud. They said to her, “No, we will return with you to your people.” But Naomi said, “Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons, would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the LORD has turned against me.” Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

Prov. 3:11-20 - My child, do not despise the LORD'S discipline or be weary of his reproof,

for the LORD reproves the one he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.

Happy are those who find wisdom, and those who get understanding,

for her income is better than silver, and her revenue better than gold.

She is more precious than jewels, and nothing you desire can compare with her.

Long life is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honor.

Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.

She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called happy.

The LORD by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding he established the heavens; by his knowledge the deeps broke open, and the clouds drop down the dew.

2 Cor. 1:1-11 - Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the church of God that is in Corinth, including all the saints throughout Achaia:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ. If we are being afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation; if we are being consoled, it is for your consolation, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we are also suffering. Our hope for you is unshaken; for we know that as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our consolation.

We do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, of the affliction we experienced in Asia; for we were so utterly, unbearably crushed that we despaired of life itself. Indeed, we felt that we had received the sentence of death so that we would rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead. He who rescued us from so deadly a peril will continue to rescue us; on him we have set our hope that he will rescue us again, as you also join in helping us by your prayers, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.

Matt. 5:1-12 - When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Christ is our head, and the wise man keeps his eyes upon him

We shall be blessed with clear vision if we keep our eyes fixed on Christ, for he, as Paul teaches, is our head, and there is in him no shadow of evil. Saint Paul himself and all who have reached the same heights of sanctity had their eyes fixed on Christ, and so have all who live and move and have their being in him.

As no darkness can be seen by anyone surrounded by light, so no trivialities can capture the attention of anyone who has his eyes on Christ. The man who keeps his eyes upon the head and origin of the whole universe has them on virtue in all its perfection; he has them on truth, on justice, on immortality and on everything else that is good, for Christ is goodness itself.

*The wise man, then, turns his eyes toward the One who is his head, but the fool gropes in darkness. No one who puts his lamp under a bed instead of on a lamp-stand will receive any light from it. People are often considered blind and useless when they make the supreme Good their aim and give themselves up to the contemplation of God, but Paul made a boast of this and proclaimed himself a fool for Christ's sake. The reason he said, *We are fools for Christ'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 travelled from place to place, destitute, naked, exhausted by hunger and thirst. When men saw him in captivity, flogged, shipwrecked, led about in chains, they could scarcely help thinking him a pitiable sight. Nevertheless, even while he suffered all this at the hands of men, he always looked toward the One who is his head and he asked: *What can separate us from the love of Christ, which is in Jesus? Can affliction or distress? Can persecution, hunger, nakedness, danger or death?* In other words, "What can force me to take my eyes from him who is my head and to turn them toward things that are contemptible?"

He bids us follow his example: Seek the things that are above, he says, which is only another way of saying: "Keep your eyes on Christ."

TUESDAY [120], 121, 122, 123 ❖ 124, 125, 126, [127]

Ruth 1:15-22 - So she said, "See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law." But Ruth said, "Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; Where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God.

Where you die, I will die— there will I be buried. May the LORD do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!"

When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

So the two of them went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they came to Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them; and the women said, "Is this Naomi?" She said to them, "Call me no longer Naomi, call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt bitterly with me.

I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty; why call me Naomi when the LORD has dealt harshly with me, and the Almighty has brought calamity upon me?"

So Naomi returned together with Ruth the Moabite, her daughter-in-law, who came back with her from the country of Moab. They came to Bethlehem at the beginning of the barley harvest.

Prov. 4:1-27 - Listen, children, to a father's instruction, and be attentive, that you may gain insight;

for I give you good precepts: do not forsake my teaching.

When I was a son with my father, tender, and my mother's favorite,

he taught me, and said to me, “Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments, and live.

Get wisdom; get insight: do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth.

Do not forsake her, and she will keep you; love her, and she will guard you.

The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever else you get, get insight.

Prize her highly, and she will exalt you; she will honor you if you embrace her.

She will place on your head a fair garland; she will bestow on you a beautiful crown.”

Hear, my child, and accept my words, that the years of your life may be many.

I have taught you the way of wisdom; I have led you in the paths of uprightness.

When you walk, your step will not be hampered; and if you run, you will not stumble.

Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.

Do not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evildoers.

Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on.

For they cannot sleep unless they have done wrong; they are robbed of sleep unless they have made someone stumble.

For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence.

But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day.

The way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what they stumble over.

My child, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings.

Do not let them escape from your sight; keep them within your heart.

For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh.

Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.

Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you.

Let your eyes look directly forward, and your gaze be straight before you.

Keep straight the path of your feet, and all your ways will be sure.

Do not swerve to the right or to the left; turn your foot away from evil.

2 Cor. 1:12-22 - Indeed, this is our boast, the testimony of our conscience: we have behaved in the world with frankness and godly sincerity, not by earthly wisdom but by the grace of God—and all the more toward you. For we write you nothing other than what you can read and also understand; I hope you will understand until the end—as you have already understood us in part—that on the day of the Lord Jesus we are your boast even as you are our boast.

Since I was sure of this, I wanted to come to you first, so that you might have a double favor; I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia, and to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on to Judea. Was I vacillating when I wanted to do this? Do I make my plans according to ordinary human standards, ready to say “Yes, yes” and “No, no” at the same time? As surely as God is faithful, our word to you has not been “Yes and No.” For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not “Yes and No”; but in him it is always “Yes.” For in him every one of God’s promises is a “Yes.” For this reason it is through him that we say the “Amen,” to the glory of God. But it is God who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us, by putting his seal on us and giving us his Spirit in our hearts as a first installment.

Matt. 5:13-20 - “You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same,

will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

A sermon on Ecclesiastes by St Gregory of Nyssa

There is a time to be born and a time to die

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 comes at last to the grave.

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

It seems to me that the birth referred to here is our salvation, as is suggested by the prophet Isaiah. This reaches its full term and is not stillborn when, having been conceived by the fear of God, the soul's own birth pangs 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. Such a choice becomes possible for us when we have received God into ourselves and have become children of God, children of the Most High. On the other hand, if what the Apostle calls *the form of Christ* has not been produced in us, we abort ourselves. The man of God must reach maturity.

Now if the meaning of a timely birth is clear, so also is the meaning of a timely death. For Saint Paul every moment was a time to die, as he proclaims 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 put to death daily* and we felt like men condemned to death.

How Paul died daily is perfectly obvious. He never gave himself up to a sinful life but kept his body under constant control. He carried death with him, Christ's death, wherever he went. He was always being crucified with Christ. It was not his own life he lived; it was Christ who lived in him. This surely was a timely death—a death whose end was true life.

I put to death and I shall give life, God says, teaching us that death to sin and life in the Spirit is his gift, and promising that whatever he puts to death he will restore to life again.

WEDNESDAY 119:145-176 ❖ 128, 129, 130

Ruth 2:1-13 - Now Naomi had a kinsman on her husband's side, a prominent rich man, of the family of Elimelech, whose name was Boaz. And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, "Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain, behind someone in whose sight I may find favor." She said to her, "Go, my daughter." So she went. She came and gleaned in the field behind the reapers. As it happened, she came to the part of the field belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech. Just then Boaz came from Bethlehem. He said to the reapers, "The LORD be with you." They answered, "The LORD bless you." Then Boaz said to his servant who was in charge of the reapers, "To whom does this young woman belong?" The servant who was in charge of the reapers answered, "She is the Moabite who came back with Naomi from the country of Moab. She said, 'Please, let me glean and gather among the sheaves behind the reapers.' So she came, and she has been on her feet from early this morning until now, without resting even for a moment."

Then Boaz said to Ruth, "Now listen, my daughter, do not go to glean in another field or leave this one, but keep close to my young women. Keep your eyes on the field that is being reaped, and follow behind them. I have ordered the young men not to bother you. If you get thirsty, go to the vessels and drink from what the young men have drawn." Then she fell

prostrate, with her face to the ground, and said to him, “Why have I found favor in your sight, that you should take notice of me, when I am a foreigner?” But Boaz answered her, “All that you have done for your mother-in-law since the death of your husband has been fully told me, and how you left your father and mother and your native land and came to a people that you did not know before. May the LORD reward you for your deeds, and may you have a full reward from the LORD, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come for refuge!” Then she said, “May I continue to find favor in your sight, my lord, for you have comforted me and spoken kindly to your servant, even though I am not one of your servants.”

Prov. 6:1-19 - My child, if you have given your pledge to your neighbor, if you have bound yourself to another,

you are snared by the utterance of your lips, caught by the words of your mouth.
So do this, my child, and save yourself, for you have come into your neighbor's power: go, hurry, and plead with your neighbor.

Give your eyes no sleep and your eyelids no slumber;
save yourself like a gazelle from the hunter, like a bird from the hand of the fowler.

Go to the ant, you lazybones; consider its ways, and be wise.
Without having any chief or officer or ruler,
it prepares its food in summer, and gathers its sustenance in harvest.
How long will you lie there, O lazybones? When will you rise from your sleep?
A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest,
and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want, like an armed warrior.

A scoundrel and a villain goes around with crooked speech,
winking the eyes, shuffling the feet, pointing the fingers,
with perverted mind devising evil, continually sowing discord;
on such a one calamity will descend suddenly; in a moment, damage beyond repair.

There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him:
haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood,
a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that hurry to run to evil,
a lying witness who testifies falsely, and one who sows discord in a family.

2 Cor. 1:23-2:17 - But I call on God as witness against me: it was to spare you that I did not come again to Corinth. I do not mean to imply that we lord it over your faith; rather, we are workers with you for your joy, because you stand firm in the faith. So I made up my mind not to make you another painful visit. For if I cause you pain, who is there to make me glad but the one whom I have pained? And I wrote as I did, so that when I came, I might not suffer pain from those who should have made me rejoice; for I am confident about all of you, that my joy would be the joy of all of you. For I wrote you out of much distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to cause you pain, but to let you know the abundant love that I have for you.

But if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but to some extent—not to exaggerate it—to all of you. This punishment by the majority is enough for such a person; so now instead you should forgive and console him, so that he may not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I urge you to reaffirm your love for him. I wrote for this reason: to test you and to know whether you are obedient in everything. Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ. And we do this so that we may not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

When I came to Troas to proclaim the good news of Christ, a door was opened for me in the Lord; but my mind could not rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I said farewell to them and went on to Macedonia.

But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads in every place the fragrance that comes from knowing him. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; to the one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is

sufficient for these things? For we are not peddlers of God's word like so many; but in Christ we speak as persons of sincerity, as persons sent from God and standing in his presence.

Matt. 5:21-26 - "You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell of fire. So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

From a letter by Saint John of Avila, priest

The life of Jesus revealed in us

Praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercy and God of all consolation who consoles us in all our trials and enables us to console others who are being tried, for we urge them on as God urges us on. As we share generously in the sufferings of Christ, so do we share generously in his consolation.

The words are those of Saint Paul the apostle. He was beaten with rods three times, flogged five times, stoned once and left for dead; he suffered every persecution men can inflict, his body was twisted by pain and toil. And all this was his lot not just on one or two occasions, for he writes: We are constantly being handed over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in us.

In all these tribulations he does not murmur or complain about God, as weaker men do. He is not saddened as those who love status and pleasure are. He does not beg God to be relieved of them, as men do who are unaware of their true value and therefore will have no part of them. He does not make light of them, as men do who set little value upon them. On the contrary, fully aware of the value of these tribulations and rising above his own weakness, Paul blesses God amid his sufferings and thanks him as though he had bestowed a fine reward. He thinks it an honour to be able to suffer for him who subjected himself to so very much shame in order to free us from the dreadful effects of sin; who exalted us by giving us his Spirit and making us adopted sons of God; and who gave us, in his own person and through his own efforts, a proof and pledge of heavenly joy.

Dear brothers and sisters, I pray God may open your eyes and let you see what hidden treasures he bestows on us in the trials from which the world thinks only to flee. Shame turns into honour when we seek God's glory. Present affliction becomes the source of heavenly glory. To those who suffer wounds in fighting his battles God opens his arms in loving, tender friendship, which is more delightful by far than anything our earthly efforts might produce. If we have any sense, we shall yearn for these open arms of God. Can anyone but a man in whom all desire is dead fail to desire him who is wholly lovable, wholly desirable?

If you long for these festivals of heavenly joy, if you want to behold them and take part in them, be assured that there is no better way to reach them than the way of suffering. This is the way Christ and his disciples have always travelled. He calls it a narrow way, but it leads straight to life. That is why he tells us that if we want to join him, we shall travel the way he took. It is surely not right that the Son of God should go his way on the path of shame while the sons of men walk the way of worldly honour: The disciple is not above his teacher, nor the servant greater than his master.

God grant that our hearts may find no rest and seek no other food in this world, save in hardship and suffering beside the Lord's cross.

Ruth 2:14-23 - At mealtime Boaz said to her, "Come here, and eat some of this bread, and dip your morsel in the sour wine." So she sat beside the reapers, and he heaped up for her some parched grain. She ate until she was satisfied, and she had some left over. When she got up to glean, Boaz instructed his young men, "Let her glean even among the standing sheaves, and do not reproach her. You must also pull out some handfuls for her from the bundles, and leave them for her to glean, and do not rebuke her."

So she gleaned in the field until evening. Then she beat out what she had gleaned, and it was about an ephah of barley. She picked it up and came into the town, and her mother-in-law saw how much she had gleaned. Then she took out and gave her what was left over after she herself had been satisfied. Her mother-in-law said to her, "Where did you glean today? And where have you worked? Blessed be the man who took notice of you." So she told her mother-in-law with whom she had worked, and said, "The name of the man with whom I worked today is Boaz." Then Naomi said to her daughter-in-law, "Blessed be he by the LORD, whose kindness has not forsaken the living or the dead!" Naomi also said to her, "The man is a relative of ours, one of our nearest kin." Then Ruth the Moabite said, "He even said to me, 'Stay close by my servants, until they have finished all my harvest.'" Naomi said to Ruth, her daughter-in-law, "It is better, my daughter, that you go out with his young women, otherwise you might be bothered in another field." So she stayed close to the young women of Boaz, gleaning until the end of the barley and wheat harvests; and she lived with her mother-in-law.

Prov. 7:1-27 - My child, keep my words and store up my commandments with you; keep my commandments and live, keep my teachings as the apple of your eye; bind them on your fingers, write them on the tablet of your heart. Say to wisdom, "You are my sister," and call insight your intimate friend, that they may keep you from the loose woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words.

For at the window of my house I looked out through my lattice, and I saw among the simple ones, I observed among the youths, a young man without sense,

passing along the street near her corner, taking the road to her house in the twilight, in the evening, at the time of night and darkness.

Then a woman comes toward him, decked out like a prostitute, wily of heart. She is loud and wayward; her feet do not stay at home;

now in the street, now in the squares, and at every corner she lies in wait.

She seizes him and kisses him, and with impudent face she says to him:

"I had to offer sacrifices, and today I have paid my vows;

so now I have come out to meet you, to seek you eagerly, and I have found you!

I have decked my couch with coverings, colored spreads of Egyptian linen;

I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon.

Come, let us take our fill of love until morning; let us delight ourselves with love.

For my husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey.

He took a bag of money with him; he will not come home until full moon."

With much seductive speech she persuades him; with her smooth talk she compels him.

Right away he follows her, and goes like an ox to the slaughter, or bounds like a stag toward the trap

until an arrow pierces its entrails. He is like a bird rushing into a snare, not knowing that it will cost him his life.

And now, my children, listen to me, and be attentive to the words of my mouth.

Do not let your hearts turn aside to her ways; do not stray into her paths.

for many are those she has laid low, and numerous are her victims.

Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death.

2 Cor. 3:1-18 - Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Surely we do not need, as some do, letters of recommendation to you or from you, do we? You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, to be known and read by all; and you show that you are a letter of Christ, prepared by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.

Such is the confidence that we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are competent of ourselves to claim anything as coming from us; our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Now if the ministry of death, chiseled in letters on stone tablets, came in glory so that the people of Israel could not gaze at Moses' face because of the glory of his face, a glory now set aside, how much more will the ministry of the Spirit come in glory? For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, much more does the ministry of justification abound in glory! Indeed, what once had glory has lost its glory because of the greater glory; for if what was set aside came through glory, much more has the permanent come in glory!

Since, then, we have such a hope, we act with great boldness, not like Moses, who put a veil over his face to keep the people of Israel from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside. But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside. Indeed, to this very day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their minds; but when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.

Matt. 5:27-37 - "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.

"It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

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

From the Instructions of St Columbanus, abbot

The immeasurable depths of God

God is everywhere. He is immeasurably vast and yet everywhere he is close at hand, as he himself bears witness: *I am a God close at hand, and not a God who is distant.* It is not a God who is far away that we are seeking, since (if we deserve it) he is within us. For he lives in us as the soul lives in the body – if only we are healthy limbs of his, if we are dead to sin. Then indeed he lives within us, he who has said: *And I will live in them and walk among them.* If we are worthy for him to be in us then in truth he gives us life, makes us his living limbs. As St Paul says, *In him we live and move and have our being.*

Given his indescribable and incomprehensible essence, who will explore the Most High? Who can examine the depths of God? Who will take pride in knowing the infinite God who fills all things and surrounds all things, who pervades all things and transcends all things, who takes possession of all things but is not himself possessed by any thing? The infinite

God *whom no-one has seen as he is?* Therefore let no-one try to penetrate the secrets of God, what he was, how he was, who he was. These things cannot be described, examined, explored. Simply – simply but strongly – believe that God is as God was, that God will be as God has always been, for God cannot be changed.

So who is God? God is the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God. Do not demand to know more of God. Those who want to see into the depths must first consider the natural world, for knowledge of the Trinity is rightly compared to knowledge of the depths of the sea: as Ecclesiastes says, *And the great depths, who shall fathom them?* Just as the depths of the sea are invisible to human sight, so the godhead of the Trinity is beyond human sense and understanding. Thus, I say, if anyone wants to know what he should believe, let him not think that he will understand better through speech than through belief: if he does that, the wisdom of God will be further from him than before.

Therefore, seek the highest knowledge not by words and arguments but by perfect and right action. Not with the tongue, gathering arguments from God-free theories, but by faith, which proceeds from purity and simplicity of heart. If you seek the ineffable by means of argument, it will be further from you than it was before; if you seek it by faith, wisdom will be in her proper place at the gateway to knowledge, and you will see her there, at least in part. Wisdom is in a certain sense attained when you believe in the invisible without first demanding to understand it. God must be believed in as he is, that is, as being invisible; even though he can be partly seen by a pure heart.

FRIDAY 140, 142 ❖ 141, 143:1-11(12)

Ruth 3:1-18 - Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, “My daughter, I need to seek some security for you, so that it may be well with you. Now here is our kinsman Boaz, with whose young women you have been working. See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. Now wash and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. When he lies down, observe the place where he lies; then, go and uncover his feet and lie down; and he will tell you what to do.” She said to her, “All that you tell me I will do.”

So she went down to the threshing floor and did just as her mother-in-law had instructed her. When Boaz had eaten and drunk, and he was in a contented mood, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of grain. Then she came stealthily and uncovered his feet, and lay down. At midnight the man was startled, and turned over, and there, lying at his feet, was a woman! He said, “Who are you?” And she answered, “I am Ruth, your servant; spread your cloak over your servant, for you are next-of-kin.” He said, “May you be blessed by the LORD, my daughter; this last instance of your loyalty is better than the first; you have not gone after young men, whether poor or rich. And now, my daughter, do not be afraid, I will do for you all that you ask, for all the assembly of my people know that you are a worthy woman. But now, though it is true that I am a near kinsman, there is another kinsman more closely related than I. Remain this night, and in the morning, if he will act as next-of-kin for you, good; let him do it. If he is not willing to act as next-of-kin for you, then, as the LORD lives, I will act as next-of-kin for you. Lie down until the morning.”

So she lay at his feet until morning, but got up before one person could recognize another; for he said, “It must not be known that the woman came to the threshing floor.” Then he said, “Bring the cloak you are wearing and hold it out.” So she held it, and he measured out six measures of barley, and put it on her back; then he went into the city. She came to her mother-in-law, who said, “How did things go with you, my daughter?” Then she told her all that the man had done for her, saying, “He gave me these six measures of barley, for he said, ‘Do not go back to your mother-in-law empty-handed.’” She replied, “Wait, my daughter, until you learn how the matter turns out, for the man will not rest, but will settle the matter today.”

Prov. 8:1-21 - Does not wisdom call, and does not understanding raise her voice?
On the heights, beside the way, at the crossroads she takes her stand;
beside the gates in front of the town, at the entrance of the portals she cries out:
"To you, O people, I call, and my cry is to all that live.
O simple ones, learn prudence; acquire intelligence, you who lack it.
Hear, for I will speak noble things, and from my lips will come what is right;
for my mouth will utter truth; wickedness is an abomination to my lips.
All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them.
They are all straight to one who understands and right to those who find knowledge.
Take my instruction instead of silver, and knowledge rather than choice gold;
for wisdom is better than jewels, and all that you may desire cannot compare with her.
I, wisdom, live with prudence, and I attain knowledge and discretion.
The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil. Pride and arrogance and the way of evil and
perverted speech I hate.

I have good advice and sound wisdom; I have insight, I have strength.
By me kings reign, and rulers decree what is just;
by me rulers rule, and nobles, all who govern rightly.
I love those who love me, and those who seek me diligently find me.
Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and prosperity.
My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold, and my yield than choice silver.
I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice,
endowing with wealth those who love me, and filling their treasuries.

2 Cor. 4:1-12 - Therefore, since it is by God's mercy that we are engaged in this ministry, we do not lose heart. We have renounced the shameful things that one hides; we refuse to practice cunning or to falsify God's word; but by the open statement of the truth we commend ourselves to the conscience of everyone in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. For it is the God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.

Matt. 5:38-48 - "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.
"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

My soul, rejoice in the Lord!

*Come, eat your bread with joy
and drink your wine with a glad heart;
for what you do, God has approved beforehand.*

This exhortation of Ecclesiastes is very proper if you take its words in their ordinary everyday sense. If we embrace a simple rule of life and let our beliefs be inspired by a sincere faith in God, we should eat our bread with joy and drink our wine with a glad heart. We should not fall into slanderous speech or devote ourselves to devious stratagems; rather, we should direct our thoughts on straight paths and (as far as is practicable) help the poor and destitute with compassion and generosity – that is, dedicate ourselves to the activities that please God himself.

But the same text can be given a spiritual meaning that leads us to higher thoughts. It speaks of the heavenly and mystical bread, which has come down from heaven, bringing life to the world, and to drink a spiritual wine with a cheerful heart, that wine which flowed from the side of the True Vine at the moment of his saving passion. Of this, the Gospel of our salvation says: *When Jesus had taken bread and blessed it, he said to his holy disciples and apostles, Take, eat; this is my body which is being broken for you for the forgiveness of sins. In the same way he took the cup and said, Drink from this, all of you: this is my blood, the blood of the new covenant, which will be shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.* For whoever eats this bread and drinks this mystical wine enjoys true happiness and rejoices, exclaiming: *You have put joy into our hearts.*

Moreover, I think this is the bread and this is the wine that is referred to in the book of Proverbs by God's self-subsistent Wisdom (that is, Christ our Saviour): *Come, eat my bread and drink the wine I have mixed for you.* Thus he refers to our mystical sharing in the Word. For those worthy to receive this are forever clothed in garments (that is, the works of light) shining as bright as light itself. As the Lord says in the Gospel, *Let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.* And, indeed, oil will be seen flowing eternally over their heads – the oil that is the Spirit of truth, guarding and preserving them from all the harm of sin.

SATURDAY 137:1-6(7-9), 144 ❖ 104

Ruth 4:1-17 - No sooner had Boaz gone up to the gate and sat down there than the next-of-kin, of whom Boaz had spoken, came passing by. So Boaz said, "Come over, friend; sit down here." And he went over and sat down. Then Boaz took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, "Sit down here"; so they sat down. He then said to the next-of-kin, "Naomi, who has come back from the country of Moab, is selling the parcel of land that belonged to our kinsman Elimelech. So I thought I would tell you of it, and say: Buy it in the presence of those sitting here, and in the presence of the elders of my people. If you will redeem it, redeem it; but if you will not, tell me, so that I may know; for there is no one prior to you to redeem it, and I come after you." So he said, "I will redeem it." Then Boaz said, "The day you acquire the field from the hand of Naomi, you are also acquiring Ruth the Moabite, the widow of the dead man, to maintain the dead man's name on his inheritance." At this, the next-of-kin said, "I cannot redeem it for myself without damaging my own inheritance. Take my right of redemption yourself, for I cannot redeem it."

Now this was the custom in former times in Israel concerning redeeming and exchanging: to confirm a transaction, the one took off a sandal and gave it to the other; this was the manner of attesting in Israel. So when the next-of-kin said to Boaz, "Acquire it for yourself," he took off his sandal. Then Boaz said to the elders and all the people, "Today you are witnesses that I have acquired from the hand of Naomi all that belonged to Elimelech and all that belonged to Chilion and Mahlon. I have also acquired Ruth the Moabite, the wife of Mahlon, to be my wife, to maintain the dead man's name on his

inheritance, in order that the name of the dead may not be cut off from his kindred and from the gate of his native place; today you are witnesses.” Then all the people who were at the gate, along with the elders, said, “We are witnesses. May the LORD make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, who together built up the house of Israel. May you produce children in Ephrathah and bestow a name in Bethlehem; and, through the children that the LORD will give you by this young woman, may your house be like the house of Perez, whom Tamar bore to Judah.”

So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When they came together, the LORD made her conceive, and she bore a son. Then the women said to Naomi, “Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without next-of-kin; and may his name be renowned in Israel! He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him.” Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her bosom, and became his nurse. The women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, “A son has been born to Naomi.” They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Prov. 8:22-36 - The LORD created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago.

Ages ago I was set up, at the first, before the beginning of the earth.

When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no springs abounding with water.

Before the mountains had been shaped, before the hills, I was brought forth—when he had not yet made earth and fields, or the world’s first bits of soil.

When he established the heavens, I was there, when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,

when he made firm the skies above, when he established the fountains of the deep, when he assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters might not transgress his command, when he marked out the foundations of the earth,

then I was beside him, like a master worker; and I was daily his delight, rejoicing before him always,

rejoicing in his inhabited world and delighting in the human race.

And now, my children, listen to me: happy are those who keep my ways.

Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it.

Happy is the one who listens to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors.

For whoever finds me finds life and obtains favor from the LORD;

but those who miss me injure themselves; all who hate me love death.”

2 Cor. 4:13–5:10 - But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—“I believed, and so I spoke”—we also believe, and so we speak, because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence. Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this tent we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling— if indeed, when we have taken it off we will not be found naked. For while we are still in this tent, we groan under our burden, because we wish not to be unclothed but to be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.

So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord— for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are

at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.

Matt. 6:1-6 - "Beware of practicing your piety before others in order to be seen by them; for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven.

"So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

"And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

From the Explanation on Ecclesiastes by St Gregory of Agrigentum

Come to the Lord and receive enlightenment

Light is sweet, says Ecclesiastes, at the sight of the sun the eyes are glad. Take away light, and the world is without beauty. Take away light, and life itself is without life. Moses, a man who saw God, says *God saw the light and said it was good.* So it is right for us to contemplate the great, *the true, the eternal light that enlightens every man that comes into the world* – that is, Christ the saviour and redeemer of the world, who was made man and lived the human condition to its very end. Of him the prophet David says in the Psalms,

Sing to the Lord and celebrate his name!

Make a road for him who rides upon the clouds –

"The Lord" is his name.

Rejoice in his sight!

He called the light sweet and foretold that it would be good to see with his own eyes the Sun of glory, he who as God-in-man said *I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark: he will have the light of life.* And again: *This is the judgement, that light has come into the world.* In this way he used the light of the sun, which we perceive with our eyes, as a prefiguration of the coming of the Sun of justice. That Sun was sweet indeed for those who were found worthy to be taught by him and to see him with their own eyes just like any other man. He was not just any man, he was also the true God, and this is why he made the blind see, the lame walk and the deaf hear, this is why he cleansed people afflicted with leprosy and by his sole command called the dead back to life.

Moreover, even now, in the present, it is a most sweet activity to look on him with the eyes of the spirit, to contemplate his divine beauty and ponder it in our hearts. Thus through communion and togetherness we are enlightened and adorned, our spirits filled with sweetness and we ourselves wrapped in holiness as in a cloak. We attain understanding and finally we are filled with exultation in God which will last all the days of this our present life. As the wise preacher Ecclesiastes said, *However great the number of years that a man may live, let him enjoy them all.* Obviously the Sun of justice makes all who gaze on him rejoice. As the prophet David says:

*The righteous are glad and exult in God's sight;
they rejoice in their gladness.*

and Rejoice in the Lord, you just: it is good for the upright to praise him.

WEEK OF 8 EPIPHANY

SUNDAY 146, 147 ❖ 111, 112, 113

Deut. 4:1-9 - So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the LORD your God with which I am charging you. You have seen for yourselves what the LORD did with regard to the Baal of Peor—how the LORD your God destroyed from among you everyone who followed the Baal of Peor, while those of you who held fast to the LORD your God are all alive today.

See, just as the LORD my God has charged me, I now teach you statutes and ordinances for you to observe in the land that you are about to enter and occupy. You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!" For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is whenever we call to him? And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?

But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children—

Prov. 9:1-12 - Wisdom has built her house, she has hewn her seven pillars. She has slaughtered her animals, she has mixed her wine, she has also set her table. She has sent out her servant girls, she calls from the highest places in the town, "You that are simple, turn in here!" To those without sense she says, "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed.

Lay aside immaturity, and live, and walk in the way of insight."

Whoever corrects a scoffer wins abuse; whoever rebukes the wicked gets hurt. A scoffer who is rebuked will only hate you; the wise, when rebuked, will love you. Give instruction to the wise, and they will become wiser still; teach the righteous and they will gain in learning.

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

For by me your days will be multiplied, and years will be added to your life. If you are wise, you are wise for yourself; if you scoff, you alone will bear it.

2 Tim. 4:1-8 - In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you: proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully.

As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

John 12:1-8 - Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was

about to betray him), said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

The Moral Reflections on Job by Pope St Gregory the Great

An upright and honest man who feared God and shunned evil.

Some people are so simple that they do not know what uprightness is. Theirs is not the true simplicity of the innocent: they are as far from that as they are far from rising to the virtue of uprightness. As long as they do not know how to guard their steps by walking in uprightness, they can never remain innocent merely by walking in simplicity. This is why St Paul warns his disciples *I hope that you are also wise in what is good, and innocent of what is bad* but also *Brothers, you are not to be childish in your outlook, though you can be babies as far as wickedness is concerned*. Thus Christ our Truth enjoins his disciples with the words *Be cunning as serpents and yet as harmless as doves*. In giving them this admonition, he had to join the two together, so that both the simplicity of the dove might be instructed by the craftiness of the serpent, and the craftiness of the serpent might be attempered by the simplicity of the dove.

That is why the Holy Spirit has manifested his presence to mankind, not only in the form of a dove but also in the form of fire. For by the dove simplicity is indicated, and by fire, zeal. So he is manifested in a dove and in fire, because those who are full of the Spirit have the mildness of simplicity, but catch fire with zeal of uprightness against the offences of sinners.

An upright and honest man who feared God and shunned evil. Undoubtedly whoever longs for the eternal country lives sincerely and uprightly: perfect in practice, and right in faith, sincere in the good that he does in this lower state, right in the high truths which he minds in his inner self. For there are some who are not sincere in the good actions that they do, looking not to be rewarded within themselves but to win favour from others. Hence it is well said by a certain wise man, *Woe to the sinner who follows two ways*. A sinner goes two ways when an action he performs belongs to God but what he aims at in his thought belongs to the world.

It is well said, *who feared God and shunned evil*, for the holy Church of the elect starts on the path of simplicity and of uprightness from fear but completes that path in charity. When, from the love of God, she feels an unwillingness to sin, then she may *shun evil*. But when she is still doing good deeds from fear then she is not entirely *shunning evil*: the fact is that she would have sinned if she could have sinned without being punished.

So then: when Job is said to have *feared God*, it is rightly related that he also *shunned evil*. Fear comes first and charity follows later; and when that has happened, the offence which is left behind in the mind is trodden underfoot by the desires of the heart.

MONDAY 1, 2, 3 ❖ 4, 7

Deut. 4:9-14 - But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children—how you once stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, "Assemble the people for me, and I will let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me as long as they live on the earth, and may teach their children so"; you approached and stood at the foot of the mountain while the mountain was blazing up to the very heavens, shrouded in dark clouds. Then the LORD spoke to you out of the fire. You heard the sound of words but saw no form; there was only a voice. He declared to you his covenant, which he charged you to observe, that is, the ten commandments; and he wrote them on two stone tablets. And the

LORD charged me at that time to teach you statutes and ordinances for you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy.

Prov. 10:1-12 - The proverbs of Solomon. A wise child makes a glad father, but a foolish child is a mother's grief.

Treasures gained by wickedness do not profit, but righteousness delivers from death. The LORD does not let the righteous go hungry, but he thwarts the craving of the wicked. A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. A child who gathers in summer is prudent, but a child who sleeps in harvest brings shame. Blessings are on the head of the righteous, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence. The memory of the righteous is a blessing, but the name of the wicked will rot. The wise of heart will heed commandments, but a babbling fool will come to ruin. Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but whoever follows perverse ways will be found out.

Whoever winks the eye causes trouble, but the one who rebukes boldly makes peace. The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life, but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence.

Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.

2 Cor. 10:1-18 - I myself, Paul, appeal to you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am humble when face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away!— I ask that when I am present I need not show boldness by daring to oppose those who think we are acting according to human standards. Indeed, we live as human beings, but we do not wage war according to human standards; for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ. We are ready to punish every disobedience when your obedience is complete.

Look at what is before your eyes. If you are confident that you belong to Christ, remind yourself of this, that just as you belong to Christ, so also do we. Now, even if I boast a little too much of our authority, which the Lord gave for building you up and not for tearing you down, I will not be ashamed of it. I do not want to seem as though I am trying to frighten you with my letters. For they say, "His letters are weighty and strong, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible." Let such people understand that what we say by letter when absent, we will also do when present.

We do not dare to classify or compare ourselves with some of those who commend themselves. But when they measure themselves by one another, and compare themselves with one another, they do not show good sense. We, however, will not boast beyond limits, but will keep within the field that God has assigned to us, to reach out even as far as you. For we were not overstepping our limits when we reached you; we were the first to come all the way to you with the good news of Christ. We do not boast beyond limits, that is, in the labors of others; but our hope is that, as your faith increases, our sphere of action among you may be greatly enlarged, so that we may proclaim the good news in lands beyond you, without boasting of work already done in someone else's sphere of action. "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." For it is not those who commend themselves that are approved, but those whom the Lord commends.

Matt. 6:7-15 - "When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

"Pray then in this way: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

The Moral Reflections on Job by Pope St Gregory the Great

If we receive good from the hand of God, why should we not also receive evil?

Paul saw the riches of wisdom within himself though he himself was outwardly a corruptible body, which why he says *We have this treasure in earthen vessels*. In Job, then, the earthenware vessel felt his gaping sores externally; while this interior treasure remained unchanged. Outwardly he had gaping wounds but that did not stop the treasure of wisdom within him from welling up and uttering these holy and instructive words: *If we have received good at the hand of the Lord, shall we not receive evil?* By *the good* he means the good things given by God, both temporal and eternal; by *evil* he means the blows he is suffering from in the present. Of those evils the Lord says, through the prophet Isaiah,

I am the Lord, unrivalled,
I form the light and create the dark.
I make good fortune and create calamity,
it is I, the Lord, who do all this.

I form the light, and create the dark, because when the darkness of pain is created by blows from without, the light of the mind is kindled by instruction within.

I make good fortune and create calamity, because when we wrongly covet things which it was right for God to create, they are turned into scourges and we see them as evil. We have been alienated from God by sin, and it is fitting that we should be brought back to peace with him by the scourge. As every being, which was created good, turns to pain for us, the mind of the chastened man may, in its humbled state, be made new in peace with the Creator.

We should especially notice the skilful turn of reflection he uses when he gathers himself up to meet the persuading of his wife, when he says *If we have received good at the hand of the Lord, shall we not receive evil?* It is a great consolation to us if, when we suffer afflictions, we recall to remembrance our Maker's gifts to us. Painful things will not depress us if we quickly remember also the gifts that we have been given. As Scripture says, *In the day of prosperity do not forget affliction, and in the day of affliction, do not forget prosperity*.

Whoever, in the moment of receiving God's gifts but forgets to fear possible affliction, will be brought low by his presumption. Equally, whoever in the moment of suffering fails to take comfort from the gifts which it has been his lot to receive, is thrown down from the steadfastness of his mind and despairs.

The two must be united so that each may always have the other's support, so that both remembrance of the gift may moderate the pain of the blow and fear of the blow may moderate exuberance at receiving the gift. Thus the holy man, to soothe the depression of his mind amidst his wounds, weighs the sweetness of the gifts against the pains of affliction, saying *If we have received good at the hand of the Lord, shall we not receive evil?*

TUESDAY 5, 6 ❖ 10, 11

Deut. 4:15-24 - Since you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire, take care and watch yourselves closely, so that you do not act corruptly by making an idol for yourselves, in the form of any figure—the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water under the earth. And when you look up to the heavens and see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, do not be led astray and bow down to them and serve them, things that the LORD your God has allotted to all the peoples everywhere under heaven. But the LORD has taken you and brought you out of the iron-smelter, out of Egypt, to become a people of his very own possession, as you are now.

The LORD was angry with me because of you, and he vowed that I should not cross the Jordan and that I should not enter the good land that the LORD your God is giving for

your possession. For I am going to die in this land without crossing over the Jordan, but you are going to cross over to take possession of that good land. So be careful not to forget the covenant that the LORD your God made with you, and not to make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything that the LORD your God has forbidden you. For the LORD your God is a devouring fire, a jealous God.

Prov. 15:16-33 - Better is a little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble with it.

Better is a dinner of vegetables where love is than a fatted ox and hatred with it. Those who are hot-tempered stir up strife, but those who are slow to anger calm contention.

The way of the lazy is overgrown with thorns, but the path of the upright is a level highway. A wise child makes a glad father, but the foolish despise their mothers.

Folly is a joy to one who has no sense, but a person of understanding walks straight ahead. Without counsel, plans go wrong, but with many advisers they succeed.

To make an apt answer is a joy to anyone, and a word in season, how good it is!

For the wise the path of life leads upward, in order to avoid Sheol below.

The LORD tears down the house of the proud, but maintains the widow's boundaries.

Evil plans are an abomination to the LORD, but gracious words are pure.

Those who are greedy for unjust gain make trouble for their households, but those who hate bribes will live.

The mind of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil.

The LORD is far from the wicked, but he hears the prayer of the righteous.

The light of the eyes rejoices the heart, and good news refreshes the body.

The ear that heeds wholesome admonition will lodge among the wise.

Those who ignore instruction despise themselves, but those who heed admonition gain understanding.

The fear of the LORD is instruction in wisdom, and humility goes before honor.

2 Cor. 11:1-21 - I wish you would bear with me in a little foolishness. Do bear with me! I feel a divine jealousy for you, for I promised you in marriage to one husband, to present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by its cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ. For if someone comes and proclaims another Jesus than the one we proclaimed, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you submit to it readily enough. I think that I am not in the least inferior to these super-apostles. I may be untrained in speech, but not in knowledge; certainly in every way and in all things we have made this evident to you.

Did I commit a sin by humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I proclaimed God's good news to you free of charge? I robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for my needs were supplied by the friends who came from Macedonia. So I refrained and will continue to refrain from burdening you in any way. As the truth of Christ is in me, this boast of mine will not be silenced in the regions of Achaia. And why? Because I do not love you? God knows I do!

And what I do I will also continue to do, in order to deny an opportunity to those who want an opportunity to be recognized as our equals in what they boast about. For such boasters are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder! Even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is not strange if his ministers also disguise themselves as ministers of righteousness. Their end will match their deeds.

I repeat, let no one think that I am a fool; but if you do, then accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little. What I am saying in regard to this boastful confidence, I am saying not with the Lord's authority, but as a fool; since many boast according to human standards, I will also boast. For you gladly put up with fools, being wise yourselves! For you

put up with it when someone makes slaves of you, or preys upon you, or takes advantage of you, or puts on airs, or gives you a slap in the face. To my shame, I must say, we were too weak for that!

Matt. 6:16-23 - “And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

“The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

The Confessions of St Augustine

Whoever I may be, Lord, I lie exposed to your scrutiny

Let me know you, O you who know me; then shall I know even as I am known. You are the strength of my soul; make your way in and shape it to yourself, that it may be yours to have and to hold, free from stain or wrinkle. I speak because this is my hope, and whenever my joy springs from that hope it is joy well founded. As for the rest of this life's experiences, the more tears are shed over them the less they are worth weeping over, and the more truly worth lamenting the less do we bewail them while mired in them. You love the truth because anyone who “does truth” comes to the light. Truth it is that I want to do, in my heart by confession in your presence, and with my pen before many witnesses.

But the abyss of the human conscience lies naked to your eyes, O Lord, so would anything be secret even if I were unwilling to confess to you? I would be hiding you from myself, but not myself from you. But now that my groans bear witness that I find no pleasure in myself, you shed light upon me and give me joy, you offer yourself, lovable and longed for, that I may thrust myself away in disgust and choose you, and be pleasing no more either to you or to myself except in what I have from you.

To you, then, Lord, I lie exposed, exactly as I am. I have spoken of what I hope to gain by confessing to you. My confession to you is made not with words of tongue and voice, but with the words of my soul and the clamour of my thought, to which your ear is attuned; for when I am bad, confession to you is simply disgust with myself, but when I am good, confession to you consists in not attributing my goodness to myself, because though you, Lord, bless the person who is just, it is only because you have first made him just when he was sinful. This is why, O Lord, my confession in your presence is silent, yet not altogether silent: there is no noise to it, but it shouts by love.

For it is you, Lord, who judge me. No-one knows what he himself is made of, except his own spirit within him, yet there is still some part of him which remains hidden even from his own spirit; but you, Lord, know everything about a human being because you have made him. And though in your sight I may despise myself and reckon myself dust and ashes, I know something about you which I do not know about myself.

It is true that we now see only a tantalising reflection in a mirror, and so it is that while I am on pilgrimage far from you I am more present to myself than to you; yet I do know that you cannot be defiled in any way whatever, whereas I do not know which temptations I may have the strength to resist, and to which ones I shall succumb. Our hope is that, because you are trustworthy, you do not allow us to be tempted more fiercely than we can bear, but along with the temptation you ordain the outcome of it, so that we can endure.

Let me, then, confess what I know about myself, and confess too what I do not know, because what I know of myself I know only because you shed light on me, and what I do not know I shall remain ignorant about until my darkness becomes like bright noon before your face.

WEDNESDAY 119:1-24 ❖ **12, 13, 14**

Deut. 4:25-31 - When you have had children and children's children, and become complacent in the land, if you act corruptly by making an idol in the form of anything, thus doing what is evil in the sight of the LORD your God, and provoking him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that you will soon utterly perish from the land that you are crossing the Jordan to occupy; you will not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed. The LORD will scatter you among the peoples; only a few of you will be left among the nations where the LORD will lead you. There you will serve other gods made by human hands, objects of wood and stone that neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell. From there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find him if you search after him with all your heart and soul. In your distress, when all these things have happened to you in time to come, you will return to the LORD your God and heed him. Because the LORD your God is a merciful God, he will neither abandon you nor destroy you; he will not forget the covenant with your ancestors that he swore to them.

Prov. 17:1-20 - Better is a dry morsel with quiet than a house full of feasting with strife. A slave who deals wisely will rule over a child who acts shamefully, and will share the inheritance as one of the family.

The crucible is for silver, and the furnace is for gold, but the LORD tests the heart. An evildoer listens to wicked lips; and a liar gives heed to a mischievous tongue.

Those who mock the poor insult their Maker; those who are glad at calamity will not go unpunished.

Grandchildren are the crown of the aged, and the glory of children is their parents. Fine speech is not becoming to a fool; still less is false speech to a ruler.

A bribe is like a magic stone in the eyes of those who give it; wherever they turn they prosper.

One who forgives an affront fosters friendship, but one who dwells on disputes will alienate a friend.

A rebuke strikes deeper into a discerning person than a hundred blows into a fool.

Evil people seek only rebellion, but a cruel messenger will be sent against them.

Better to meet a she-bear robbed of its cubs than to confront a fool immersed in folly.

Evil will not depart from the house of one who returns evil for good.

The beginning of strife is like letting out water; so stop before the quarrel breaks out.

One who justifies the wicked and one who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the LORD.

Why should fools have a price in hand to buy wisdom, when they have no mind to learn?

A friend loves at all times, and kinsfolk are born to share adversity.

It is senseless to give a pledge, to become surety for a neighbor.

One who loves transgression loves strife; one who builds a high threshold invites broken bones.

The crooked of mind do not prosper, and the perverse of tongue fall into calamity.

2 Cor. 11:21b-33 - But whatever anyone dares to boast of—I am speaking as a fool—I also dare to boast of that. Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they descendants of Abraham? So am I. Are they ministers of Christ? I am talking like a madman—I am a better one: with far greater labors, far more imprisonments, with countless floggings, and often near death. Five times I have received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods. Once I received a stoning. Three times I was shipwrecked; for a night and a day I was adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from bandits, danger from my own people, danger

from Gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brothers and sisters; in toil and hardship, through many a sleepless night, hungry and thirsty, often without food, cold and naked. And, besides other things, I am under daily pressure because of my anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is made to stumble, and I am not indignant?

If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus (blessed be he forever!) knows that I do not lie. In Damascus, the governor under King Aretas guarded the city of Damascus in order to seize me, but I was let down in a basket through a window in the wall, and escaped from his hands.

Matt. 6:24-34 - “No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

“So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

The Confessions of St Augustine

All my hope lies in your great mercy

Where did I find you in order to make your acquaintance in the first place? You could not have been in my memory before I learned to know you. Where then could I have found you in order to learn of you, if not in yourself, far above me? “Place” has here no meaning: further away from you or toward you we may travel, but place there is none. O Truth, you hold sovereign sway over all who turn to you for counsel, and to all of them you respond at the same time, however diverse their pleas.

Clear is your response, but not all hear it clearly. They all appeal to you about what they want, but do not always hear what they want to hear. Your best servant is the one who is less intent on hearing from you what accords with his own will, and more on embracing with his will what he has heard from you.

Late have I loved you, Beauty so ancient and so new, late have I loved you!

Lo, you were within,
but I outside, seeking there for you,
and upon the shapely things you have made
I rushed headlong – I, misshapen.

You were with me, but I was not with you.

They held me back far from you,
those things which would have no being,
were they not in you.

You called, shouted, broke through my deafness;
you flared, blazed, banished my blindness;
you lavished your fragrance, I gasped; and now I pant for you;

I tasted you, and now I hunger and thirst;
you touched me, and I burned for your peace.

When at last I cling to you with my whole being there will be no more anguish or labour for me, and my life will be alive indeed, alive because filled with you. But now it is very different. Anyone whom you fill you also uplift; but I am not full of you, and so I am a burden to myself. Joys over which I ought to weep do battle with sorrows that should be matter for joy, and I do not know which will be victorious. But I also see griefs that are evil at war in me with joys that are good, and I do not know which will win the day. This is agony, Lord, have pity on me! It is agony! See, I do not hide my wounds; you are the physician and I am sick; you are merciful, I in need of mercy.

Is not human life on earth a time of testing? Who would choose troubles and hardships? You command us to endure them, but not to love them. No-one loves what he has to endure, even if he loves the endurance, for although he may rejoice in his power to endure, he would prefer to have nothing that demands endurance. In adverse circumstances I long for prosperity, and in times of prosperity I dread adversity. What middle ground is there, between these two, where human life might be free from trial? Woe betide worldly prosperity, and woe again, from fear of disaster and evanescent joy! But woe, woe, and woe again upon worldly adversity, from envy of better fortune, the hardship of adversity itself, and the fear that endurance may falter. Is not human life on earth a time of testing without respite?

On your exceedingly great mercy, and on that alone, rests all my hope.

THURSDAY 18:1-20 ❖ 18:21-50

Deut. 4:32-40 - For ask now about former ages, long before your own, ever since the day that God created human beings on the earth; ask from one end of heaven to the other: has anything so great as this ever happened or has its like ever been heard of? Has any people ever heard the voice of a god speaking out of a fire, as you have heard, and lived? Or has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by terrifying displays of power, as the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes? To you it was shown so that you would acknowledge that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him. From heaven he made you hear his voice to discipline you. On earth he showed you his great fire, while you heard his words coming out of the fire. And because he loved your ancestors, he chose their descendants after them. He brought you out of Egypt with his own presence, by his great power, driving out before you nations greater and mightier than yourselves, to bring you in, giving you their land for a possession, as it is still today. So acknowledge today and take to heart that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other. Keep his statutes and his commandments, which I am commanding you today for your own well-being and that of your descendants after you, so that you may long remain in the land that the LORD your God is giving you for all time.

Prov. 21:30-22:6 - No wisdom, no understanding, no counsel, can avail against the LORD.

The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but the victory belongs to the LORD. A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favor is better than silver or gold.

The rich and the poor have this in common: the LORD is the maker of them all.

The clever see danger and hide; but the simple go on, and suffer for it.

The reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life.

Thorns and snares are in the way of the perverse; the cautious will keep far from them.

Train children in the right way, and when old, they will not stray.

2 Cor. 12:1-10 - It is necessary to boast; nothing is to be gained by it, but I will go on to visions and revelations of the Lord. I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. And I know that such a person—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows— was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat. On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me, even considering the exceptional character of the revelations. Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

Matt. 7:1-12 - “Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s eye.

“Do not give what is holy to dogs; and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you.

“Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

“In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.

The Moral Reflections on Job by Pope St Gregory the Great

The law of the Lord is manifold

If only God would show you how manifold is his law. How must we interpret this law of God? How, if not by love? The love that stamps the precepts of right-living on the mind and bids us put them into practice. Listen to Truth speaking of this law: This is my commandment, that you love one another. Listen to Paul: The whole law, he declares, is summed up in love; and again: Help one another in your troubles, and you will fulfil the law of Christ. The law of Christ – does anything other than love more fittingly describe it? Truly we are keeping this law when, out of love, we go to the help of a brother in trouble.

But we are told that this law is manifold. Why? Because love’s lively concern for others is reflected in all the virtues. It begins with two commands, but it soon embraces many more. Paul gives a good summary of its various aspects. *Love is patient, he says, and kind; it is never jealous or conceited; its conduct is blameless; it is not ambitious, not selfish, not quick to take offence; it harbours no evil thoughts, does not gloat over other people’s sins, but is gladdened by an upright life.*

The man ruled by this love shows his *patience* by bearing wrongs with equanimity; his *kindness* by generously repaying good for evil. *Jealousy* is foreign to him. It is impossible to envy worldly success when he has no worldly desires. He is not *conceited*. The prizes he covets lie within; outward blessings do not elate him. His conduct is *blameless*, for he cannot do wrong in devoting himself entirely to love of God and his neighbour. He is not *ambitious*. The

welfare of his own soul is what he cares about. Apart from that he seeks nothing. He is not *selfish*. Unable to keep anything he has in this world, he is as indifferent to it as if it were another's. Indeed, in his eyes nothing is his own but what will be so always. He is *not quick to take offence*. Even under provocation, thought of revenge never crosses his mind. The reward he seeks hereafter will be greater in proportion to his endurance. He harbours *no evil thoughts*. Hatred is utterly rooted out of a heart whose only love is goodness. Thoughts that defile a man can find no entry. He *does not gloat over* other people's sins. No; an enemy's fall affords him no delight, for loving all men, he longs for their salvation.

On the other hand, *he is gladdened by an upright life*. Since he loves others as himself, he takes as much pleasure in whatever good he sees in them as if the progress were his own. That is why this law of God is manifold.

FRIDAY 16, 17 ❖ 22

Deut. 5:1-22 - Moses convened all Israel, and said to them: Hear, O Israel, the statutes and ordinances that I am addressing to you today; you shall learn them and observe them diligently. The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. Not with our ancestors did the LORD make this covenant, but with us, who are all of us here alive today. The LORD spoke with you face to face at the mountain, out of the fire. (At that time I was standing between the LORD and you to declare to you the words of the LORD; for you were afraid because of the fire and did not go up the mountain.) And he said:

I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

Observe the sabbath day and keep it holy, as the LORD your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, or your son or your daughter, or your male or female slave, or your ox or your donkey, or any of your livestock, or the resident alien in your towns, so that your male and female slave may rest as well as you. Remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the LORD your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the LORD your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day.

Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God commanded you, so that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

You shall not murder.

Neither shall you commit adultery.

Neither shall you steal.

Neither shall you bear false witness against your neighbor.

Neither shall you covet your neighbor's wife. Neither shall you desire your neighbor's house, or field, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

These words the LORD spoke with a loud voice to your whole assembly at the mountain, out of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, and he added no more. He wrote them on two stone tablets, and gave them to me.

Prov. 23:19-21,29-24:2 - Hear, my child, and be wise, and direct your mind in the way. Do not be among winebibbers, or among gluttonous eaters of meat; for the drunkard and the glutton will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe them with rags.

Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes?

Those who linger late over wine, those who keep trying mixed wines.

Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly.

At the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like an adder.

Your eyes will see strange things, and your mind utter perverse things.

You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast.

"They struck me," you will say, "but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it.

When shall I awake? I will seek another drink."

Do not envy the wicked, nor desire to be with them;

for their minds devise violence, and their lips talk of mischief.

2 Cor. 12:11-21 - I have been a fool! You forced me to it. Indeed you should have been the ones commending me, for I am not at all inferior to these super-apostles, even though I am nothing. The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, signs and wonders and mighty works. How have you been worse off than the other churches, except that I myself did not burden you? Forgive me this wrong!

Here I am, ready to come to you this third time. And I will not be a burden, because I do not want what is yours but you; for children ought not to lay up for their parents, but parents for their children. I will most gladly spend and be spent for you. If I love you more, am I to be loved less? Let it be assumed that I did not burden you. Nevertheless (you say) since I was crafty, I took you in by deceit. Did I take advantage of you through any of those whom I sent to you? I urged Titus to go, and sent the brother with him. Titus did not take advantage of you, did he? Did we not conduct ourselves with the same spirit? Did we not take the same steps?

Have you been thinking all along that we have been defending ourselves before you? We are speaking in Christ before God. Everything we do, beloved, is for the sake of building you up. For I fear that when I come, I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish; I fear that there may perhaps be quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder. I fear that when I come again, my God may humble me before you, and that I may have to mourn over many who previously sinned and have not repented of the impurity, sexual immorality, and licentiousness that they have practiced.

Matt. 7:13-21 - "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will know them by their fruits.

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.

The nation of angels was bathed with the light of holy faith

Glory to God in the highest and peace to his people on earth, because the grain of wheat has fallen into the earth and has died. Christ has died in order to reign in heaven. Not only that: by his death we live; by his weakness we are strengthened; by his passion we are freed from suffering; impelled by his love, we are seeking in Britain brothers whom we do not know; through his help we have found those for whom we were searching, although we were not acquainted with them.

Who, dear brother, is capable of describing the great joy of believers when they have learned what the grace of Almighty God and your own cooperation achieved among the Angles? They abandoned the errors of darkness and were bathed with the light of holy faith. With full awareness they trampled on the idols which they had previously adored with savage fear. They are now committed to Almighty God. The guidelines given them for their preaching restrain them from falling into evil ways. In their minds they are submissive to the divine precepts and consequently feel uplifted. They bow down to the ground in prayer lest their minds cling too closely to earthly things. Whose achievement is this? It is the achievement of him who said: *My Father is at work until now and I am at work as well.*

God chose illiterate preachers and sent them into the world in order to show the world that conversion is brought about not by men's wisdom but rather by his own power. So in like manner God worked through weak instruments and wrought great things among the Angles. Dear brother, in this heavenly gift there is something which should inspire us with great fear and great joy.

For I know through your love for that people, specially chosen for you, that Almighty God has performed great miracles. But it is necessary that the same heavenly gift should cause you to rejoice with fear and to fear with gladness. You should be glad because by means of external miracles the souls of the Angles have been led to interior grace. But you should tremble, lest on account of these signs, the preacher's own weak soul be puffed up with presumption; lest, while seeming externally raised aloft in honour, it fall internally as a result of vainglory.

We should remember that when the disciples on their joyous return from their preaching mission said to their heavenly master: *Lord, in your name even devils were subjected to us, he immediately retorted: Do not rejoice about this but rather that your names are inscribed in heaven.*

SATURDAY 20, 21:1-7(8-14) ♦ 110:1-5(6-7), 116, 117

Deut. 5:22-33 - These words the LORD spoke with a loud voice to your whole assembly at the mountain, out of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness, and he added no more. He wrote them on two stone tablets, and gave them to me. When you heard the voice out of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, you approached me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders; and you said, "Look, the LORD our God has shown us his glory and greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the fire. Today we have seen that God may speak to someone and the person may still live. So now why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer, we shall die. For who is there of all flesh that has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of fire, as we have, and remained alive? Go near, you yourself, and hear all that the LORD our God will say. Then tell us everything that the LORD our God tells you, and we will listen and do it."

The LORD heard your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me: "I have heard the words of this people, which they have spoken to you; they are right in all that they have spoken. If only they had such a mind as this, to fear me and to keep all my commandments always, so that it might go well with them and with their children forever! Go say to them, 'Return to your tents.' But you, stand here by me, and I will tell you all the

commandments, the statutes and the ordinances, that you shall teach them, so that they may do them in the land that I am giving them to possess.” You must therefore be careful to do as the LORD your God has commanded you; you shall not turn to the right or to the left. You must follow exactly the path that the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live, and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you are to possess.

Prov. 25:15-28 - With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue can break bones.

If you have found honey, eat only enough for you, or else, having too much, you will vomit it.

Let your foot be seldom in your neighbor’s house, otherwise the neighbor will become weary of you and hate you.

Like a war club, a sword, or a sharp arrow is one who bears false witness against a neighbor.

Like a bad tooth or a lame foot is trust in a faithless person in time of trouble.

Like vinegar on a wound is one who sings songs to a heavy heart. Like a moth in clothing or a worm in wood, sorrow gnaws at the human heart.

If your enemies are hungry, give them bread to eat; and if they are thirsty, give them water to drink;

for you will heap coals of fire on their heads, and the LORD will reward you.

The north wind produces rain, and a backbiting tongue, angry looks.

It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a contentious wife.

Like cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.

Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain are the righteous who give way before the wicked.

It is not good to eat much honey, or to seek honor on top of honor.

Like a city breached, without walls, is one who lacks self-control.

2 Cor. 13:1-14 - This is the third time I am coming to you. “Any charge must be sustained by the evidence of two or three witnesses.” I warned those who sinned previously and all the others, and I warn them now while absent, as I did when present on my second visit, that if I come again, I will not be lenient— since you desire proof that Christ is speaking in me. He is not weak in dealing with you, but is powerful in you. For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God.

Examine yourselves to see whether you are living in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not realize that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless, indeed, you fail to meet the test! I hope you will find out that we have not failed. But we pray to God that you may not do anything wrong—not that we may appear to have met the test, but that you may do what is right, though we may seem to have failed. For we cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth. For we rejoice when we are weak and you are strong. This is what we pray for, that you may become perfect. So I write these things while I am away from you, so that when I come, I may not have to be severe in using the authority that the Lord has given me for building up and not for tearing down.

Finally, brothers and sisters, farewell. Put things in order, listen to my appeal, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

Matt. 7:22-29 - On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many deeds of power in your name?’ Then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; go away from me, you evildoers.’

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on

that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!”

Now when Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.

WEEK OF LAST EPIPHANY

SUNDAY 148, 149, 150 ❖ 114, 115

Deut. 6:1-9 - Now this is the commandment—the statutes and the ordinances—that the LORD your God charged me to teach you to observe in the land that you are about to cross into and occupy, so that you and your children and your children’s children, may fear the LORD your God all the days of your life, and keep all his decrees and his commandments that I am commanding you, so that your days may be long. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe them diligently, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may multiply greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, has promised you.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Eccles. 48:1-11 - Then Elijah arose, a prophet like fire, and his word burned like a torch. He brought a famine upon them, and by his zeal he made them few in number.

By the word of the Lord he shut up the heavens, and also three times brought down fire. How glorious you were, Elijah, in your wondrous deeds! Whose glory is equal to yours? You raised a corpse from death and from Hades, by the word of the Most High. You sent kings down to destruction, and famous men, from their sickbeds. You heard rebuke at Sinai and judgments of vengeance at Horeb. You anointed kings to inflict retribution, and prophets to succeed you. You were taken up by a whirlwind of fire, in a chariot with horses of fire.

At the appointed time, it is written, you are destined to calm the wrath of God before it breaks out in fury, to turn the hearts of parents to their children, and to restore the tribes of Jacob.

Happy are those who saw you and were adorned with your love! For we also shall surely live.

Heb. 12:18-29 - You have not come to something that can be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers beg that not another word be spoken to them. (For they could not endure the order that was given, “If even an animal touches the mountain, it shall be stoned to death.”) Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I tremble with fear.”) But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

See that you do not refuse the one who is speaking; for if they did not escape when they refused the one who warned them on earth, how much less will we escape if we reject the one who warns from heaven! At that time his voice shook the earth; but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven.” This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of what is shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that

cannot be shaken, let us give thanks, by which we offer to God an acceptable worship with reverence and awe; for indeed our God is a consuming fire.

John 12:24-32 - Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.”

The Confessions of St Augustine

Our hearts find no rest until they rest in you

Great are you, O Lord, and exceedingly worthy of praise; your power is immense, and your wisdom beyond reckoning. And so we men, who are a due part of your creation, long to praise you – we also carry our mortality about with us, carry the evidence of our sin and with it the proof that you thwart the proud. You arouse us so that praising you may bring us joy, because you have made us and drawn us to yourself, and our heart is unquiet until it rests in you.

Grant me to know and understand, Lord, which comes first. To call upon you or to praise you? To know you or to call upon you? Must we know you before we can call upon you? Anyone who invokes what is still unknown may be making a mistake. Or should you be invoked first, so that we may then come to know you? But *how can people call upon someone in whom they do not yet believe? And how can they believe without a preacher?*

But scripture tells us that those who seek the Lord will praise him, for as they seek they find him, and on finding him they will praise him. Let me seek you then, Lord, even while I am calling upon you, and call upon you even as I believe in you; for to us you have indeed been preached. My faith calls upon you, Lord, this faith which is your gift to me, which you have breathed into me through the humanity of your Son and the ministry of your preacher.

How shall I call upon my God, my God and my Lord, when by the very act of calling upon him I would be calling him into myself? Is there any place within me into which my God might come? How should the God who made heaven and earth come into me? Is there any room in me for you, Lord, my God? Even heaven and earth, which you have made and in which you have made me – can even they contain you? Since nothing that exists would exist without you, does it follow that whatever exists does in some way contain you?

But if this is so, how can I, who am one of these existing things, ask you to come into me, when I would not exist at all unless you were already in me? Not yet am I in hell, after all but even if I were, you would be there too; for *if I descend into the underworld, you are there*. No, my God, I would not exist, I would not be at all, if you were not in me. Or should I say, rather, that I should not exist if I were not in you, *from whom are all things, through whom are all things, in whom are all things?* Yes, Lord, that is the truth, that is indeed the truth. To what place can I invite you, then, since I am in you? Or where could you come from, in order to come into me? To what place outside heaven and earth could I travel, so that my God could come to me there, the God who said, *I fill heaven and earth?*

Who will grant it to me to find peace in you? Who will grant me this grace, that you should come into my heart and inebriate it, enabling me to forget the evils that beset me and embrace you, my only good? What are you to me? Have mercy on me, so that I may tell. What indeed am I to you, that you should command me to love you, and grow angry with

me if I do not, and threaten me with enormous woes? Is not the failure to love you woe enough in itself?

Alas for me! Through your own merciful dealings with me, O Lord my God, tell me what you are to me. Say to my soul, *I am your salvation*. Say it so that I can hear it. My heart is listening, Lord; open the ears of my heart and say to my soul, *I am your salvation*. Let me run towards this voice and seize hold of you. Do not hide your face from me: let me die so that I may see it, for not to see it would be death to me indeed.

MONDAY 25 ❖ 9, 15

Deut. 6:10-15 - When the LORD your God has brought you into the land that he swore to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you—a land with fine, large cities that you did not build, houses filled with all sorts of goods that you did not fill, hewn cisterns that you did not hew, vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant—and when you have eaten your fill, take care that you do not forget the LORD, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. The LORD your God you shall fear; him you shall serve, and by his name alone you shall swear. Do not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who are all around you, because the LORD your God, who is present with you, is a jealous God. The anger of the LORD your God would be kindled against you and he would destroy you from the face of the earth.

Prov. 27:1-6,10-12 - Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring.

Let another praise you, and not your own mouth—a stranger, and not your own lips. A stone is heavy, and sand is weighty, but a fool's provocation is heavier than both. Wrath is cruel, anger is overwhelming, but who is able to stand before jealousy? Better is open rebuke than hidden love.

Well meant are the wounds a friend inflicts, but profuse are the kisses of an enemy. Do not forsake your friend or the friend of your parent; do not go to the house of your kindred in the day of your calamity. Better is a neighbor who is nearby than kindred who are far away.

Be wise, my child, and make my heart glad, so that I may answer whoever reproaches me. The clever see danger and hide; but the simple go on, and suffer for it.

Heb. 1:1-14 - Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you"? Or again, "I will be his Father, and he will be my Son"?

And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."

Of the angels he says, "He makes his angels winds, and his servants flames of fire."

But of the Son he says, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, and the righteous scepter is the scepter of your kingdom.

You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions."

And, "In the beginning, Lord, you founded the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands;

they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like clothing;

like a cloak you will roll them up, and like clothing they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will never end."

But to which of the angels has he ever said, "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet"?

Are not all angels spirits in the divine service, sent to serve for the sake of those who are to inherit salvation?

John 1:1-18 - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; yet the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.'") From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

A colloquy of St Dorotheus

The reason for all disturbance is that no-one blames himself

My brethren, let us consider how it can happen so often that someone hears something unpleasant and goes away untroubled, as if he had not heard it; and yet sometimes he is disturbed and troubled as soon as he hears such words. What is the cause of this inconsistency? Is there one reason for it or many? I recognise several, but one in particular is the source of all the others. As someone has put it: it all comes from the person's state of mind at the time.

If someone is engaged in prayer or contemplation, he can easily take a rebuke from his brother and be unmoved by it. Or again, his affection toward a brother may be a strong reason; love bears all things with the utmost patience. Yet another reason may be contempt: if a person despises the one who is trying to trouble him, and acts as if he is the vilest of all creatures and considers it beneath his dignity even to look at him, or to answer him, or to mention the affront and insults to anyone else, he will not be moved by his words.

All in all, then, no-one is disturbed or troubled if he scorns and disregards what is said. But on the other hand, it is also possible for someone to be disturbed and troubled by his brother's words, either because he is not in a good frame of mind, or because he hates his brother. There are a great number of other reasons as well.

Yet the reason for all disturbance, if we look to its roots, is that no one finds fault with himself. This is the reason why we become angry and upset, why we sometimes have no peace in our soul. We should not be surprised, since holy men have taught us that there is no other path to peace but this.

We see that this is true in so many other people; and yet we hope, in our laziness and desire for peace, we hope or even believe that we are on the right path even when we are irritated by everything and cannot bear to accept any blame ourselves.

This is the way things are. However many virtues a man may have – they could be innumerable, they could be infinite – if he has left the path of self-accusation he will never have peace: he will be afflicted by others or he will be an affliction to them, and all his efforts will be wasted.

TUESDAY 26, 28 ♦ 36, 39

Deut. 6:16-25 - Do not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah. You must diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his decrees, and his statutes that he has commanded you. Do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, so that it may go well with you, and so that you may go in and occupy the good land that the LORD swore to your ancestors to give you, thrusting out all your enemies from before you, as the LORD has promised.

When your children ask you in time to come, “What is the meaning of the decrees and the statutes and the ordinances that the LORD our God has commanded you?” then you shall say to your children, “We were Pharaoh’s slaves in Egypt, but the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand. The LORD displayed before our eyes great and awesome signs and wonders against Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his household. He brought us out from there in order to bring us in, to give us the land that he promised on oath to our ancestors. Then the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our lasting good, so as to keep us alive, as is now the case. If we diligently observe this entire commandment before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us, we will be in the right.”

Prov. 30:1-4,24-33 - The words of Agur son of Jakeh. An oracle. Thus says the man: I am weary, O God, I am weary, O God. How can I prevail?

Surely I am too stupid to be human; I do not have human understanding.

I have not learned wisdom, nor have I knowledge of the holy ones.

Who has ascended to heaven and come down? Who has gathered the wind in the hollow of the hand? Who has wrapped up the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is the person’s name? And what is the name of the person’s child?

Surely you know!

Four things on earth are small, yet they are exceedingly wise:

the ants are a people without strength, yet they provide their food in the summer;

the badgers are a people without power, yet they make their homes in the rocks;

the locusts have no king, yet all of them march in rank;

the lizard can be grasped in the hand, yet it is found in kings’ palaces.

Three things are stately in their stride; four are stately in their gait:

the lion, which is mightiest among wild animals and does not turn back before any;

the strutting rooster, the he-goat, and a king striding before his people.

If you have been foolish, exalting yourself, or if you have been devising evil, put your hand on your mouth.

For as pressing milk produces curds, and pressing the nose produces blood, so pressing anger produces strife.

Heb. 2:1-10 - Therefore we must pay greater attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the message declared through angels was valid, and every transgression or disobedience received a just penalty, how can we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? It was declared at first through the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, while God added his testimony by signs and wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, distributed according to his will.

Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels. But someone has testified somewhere, “What are human beings that you are mindful of them, or mortals, that you care for them?”

You have made them for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned them with glory and honor,

subjecting all things under their feet.” Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them, but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

John 1:19-28 - This is the testimony given by John when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” He confessed and did not deny it, but confessed, “I am not the Messiah.” And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the prophet?” He answered, “No.” Then they said to him, “Who are you? Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” He said, “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’” as the prophet Isaiah said.

Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, “Why then are you baptizing if you are neither the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?” John answered them, “I baptize with water. Among you stands one whom you do not know, the one who is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandal.” This took place in Bethany across the Jordan where John was baptizing.

ASH WEDNESDAY 95* & 32, 143 ❖ 102, 130

Jonah 3:1-4:11 - The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying, “Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.” So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days’ walk across. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s walk. And he cried out, “Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

When the news reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. Then he had a proclamation made in Nineveh: “By the decree of the king and his nobles: No human being or animal, no herd or flock, shall taste anything. They shall not feed, nor shall they drink water. Human beings and animals shall be covered with sackcloth, and they shall cry mightily to God. All shall turn from their evil ways and from the violence that is in their hands. Who knows? God may relent and change his mind; he may turn from his fierce anger, so that we do not perish.”

When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. He prayed to the LORD and said, “O LORD! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live.” And the LORD said, “Is it right for you to be angry?” Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

The LORD God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, “It is better for me to die than to live.”

But God said to Jonah, “Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?” And he said, “Yes, angry enough to die.” Then the LORD said, “You are concerned about the bush, for which

you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night. And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?"

Amos 5:6-15 - Seek the LORD and live, or he will break out against the house of Joseph like fire, and it will devour Bethel, with no one to quench it.

Ah, you that turn justice to wormwood, and bring righteousness to the ground!

The one who made the Pleiades and Orion, and turns deep darkness into the morning, and darkens the day into night, who calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out on the surface of the earth, the LORD is his name, who makes destruction flash out against the strong, so that destruction comes upon the fortress.

They hate the one who reproves in the gate, and they abhor the one who speaks the truth. Therefore because you trample on the poor and take from them levies of grain, you have built houses of hewn stone, but you shall not live in them; you have planted pleasant vineyards, but you shall not drink their wine.

For I know how many are your transgressions, and how great are your sins— you who afflict the righteous, who take a bribe, and push aside the needy in the gate.

Therefore the prudent will keep silent in such a time; for it is an evil time.

Seek good and not evil, that you may live; and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you, just as you have said.

Hate evil and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

Heb. 12:1-14 - Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Consider him who endured such hostility against himself from sinners, so that you may not grow weary or lose heart. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And you have forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as children— "My child, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, or lose heart when you are punished by him;

for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and chastises every child whom he accepts." Endure trials for the sake of discipline. God is treating you as children; for what child is there whom a parent does not discipline? If you do not have that discipline in which all children share, then you are illegitimate and not his children. Moreover, we had human parents to discipline us, and we respected them. Should we not be even more willing to be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share his holiness. Now, discipline always seems painful rather than pleasant at the time, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

Pursue peace with everyone, and the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

Luke 18:9-14 - He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted."

Deut. 7:6-II - For you are a people holy to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

It was not because you were more numerous than any other people that the LORD set his heart on you and chose you—for you were the fewest of all peoples. It was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath that he swore to your ancestors, that the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Know therefore that the LORD your God is God, the faithful God who maintains covenant loyalty with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, and who repays in their own person those who reject him. He does not delay but repays in their own person those who reject him. Therefore, observe diligently the commandment—the statutes, and the ordinances—that I am commanding you today.

Hab. 3:1-18 - A prayer of the prophet Habakkuk according to Shigionoth.

O LORD, I have heard of your renown, and I stand in awe, O LORD, of your work. In our own time revive it; in our own time make it known; in wrath may you remember mercy.

God came from Teman, the Holy One from Mount Paran. *Selah* His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.

The brightness was like the sun; rays came forth from his hand, where his power lay hidden.

Before him went pestilence, and plague followed close behind.

He stopped and shook the earth; he looked and made the nations tremble. The eternal mountains were shattered; along his ancient pathways the everlasting hills sank low.

I saw the tents of Cushan under affliction; the tent-curtains of the land of Midian trembled.

Was your wrath against the rivers, O LORD? Or your anger against the rivers, or your rage against the sea, when you drove your horses, your chariots to victory?

You brandished your naked bow, sated were the arrows at your command. *Selah* You split the earth with rivers.

The mountains saw you, and writhed; a torrent of water swept by; the deep gave forth its voice. The sun raised high its hands;

the moon stood still in its exalted place, at the light of your arrows speeding by, at the gleam of your flashing spear.

In fury you trod the earth, in anger you trampled nations.

You came forth to save your people, to save your anointed. You crushed the head of the wicked house, laying it bare from foundation to roof. *Selah*

You pierced with his own arrows the head of his warriors, who came like a whirlwind to scatter us, gloating as if ready to devour the poor who were in hiding.

You trampled the sea with your horses, churning the mighty waters.

I hear, and I tremble within; my lips quiver at the sound. Rottenness enters into my bones, and my steps tremble beneath me. I wait quietly for the day of calamity to come upon the people who attack us.

Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines; though the produce of the olive fails and the fields yield no food; though the flock is cut off from the fold and there is no herd in the stalls,

yet I will rejoice in the LORD; I will exult in the God of my salvation.

Titus 1:1-16 - Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and the knowledge of the truth that is in accordance with godliness, in the hope of eternal life that God, who never lies, promised before the ages began—in due time he revealed his word through the proclamation with which I have been entrusted by the command of God our Savior,

To Titus, my loyal child in the faith we share: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

I left you behind in Crete for this reason, so that you should put in order what remained to be done, and should appoint elders in every town, as I directed you: someone who is blameless, married only once, whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery and not rebellious. For a bishop, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or addicted to wine or violent or greedy for gain; but he must be hospitable, a lover of goodness, prudent, upright, devout, and self-controlled. He must have a firm grasp of the word that is trustworthy in accordance with the teaching, so that he may be able both to preach with sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict it.

There are also many rebellious people, idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision; they must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for sordid gain what it is not right to teach. It was one of them, their very own prophet, who said, "Cretans are always liars, vicious brutes, lazy gluttons."

That testimony is true. For this reason rebuke them sharply, so that they may become sound in the faith, not paying attention to Jewish myths or to commandments of those who reject the truth. To the pure all things are pure, but to the corrupt and unbelieving nothing is pure. Their very minds and consciences are corrupted. They profess to know God, but they deny him by their actions. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

John 1:29-34 - The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, "Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' I myself did not know him; but I came baptizing with water for this reason, that he might be revealed to Israel." And John testified, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I myself have seen and have testified that this is the Son of God."

FRIDAY 95* & 31 ❖ 35

Deut. 7:12-16 - If you heed these ordinances, by diligently observing them, the LORD your God will maintain with you the covenant loyalty that he swore to your ancestors; he will love you, bless you, and multiply you; he will bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the issue of your flock, in the land that he swore to your ancestors to give you. You shall be the most blessed of peoples, with neither sterility nor barrenness among you or your livestock. The LORD will turn away from you every illness; all the dread diseases of Egypt that you experienced, he will not inflict on you, but he will lay them on all who hate you. You shall devour all the peoples that the LORD your God is giving over to you, showing them no pity; you shall not serve their gods, for that would be a snare to you.

Ezek. 18:1-4, 25-32 - The word of the LORD came to me: What do you mean by repeating this proverb concerning the land of Israel, "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge"? As I live, says the Lord GOD, this proverb shall no more be used by you in Israel. Know that all lives are mine; the life of the parent as well as the life of the child is mine: it is only the person who sins that shall die.

Yet you say, "The way of the Lord is unfair." Hear now, O house of Israel: Is my way unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair? When the righteous turn away from their righteousness and commit iniquity, they shall die for it; for the iniquity that they have committed they shall die. Again, when the wicked turn away from the wickedness they have committed and do what is lawful and right, they shall save their life. Because they considered and turned away from all the transgressions that they had committed, they shall surely live; they shall not die. Yet the house of Israel says, "The way of the Lord is unfair." O house of Israel, are my ways unfair? Is it not your ways that are unfair?

Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, all of you according to your ways, says the Lord GOD. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; otherwise iniquity will be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord GOD. Turn, then, and live.

Titus 2:1-15 - But as for you, teach what is consistent with sound doctrine. Tell the older men to be temperate, serious, prudent, and sound in faith, in love, and in endurance.

Likewise, tell the older women to be reverent in behavior, not to be slanderers or slaves to drink; they are to teach what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be self-controlled, chaste, good managers of the household, kind, being submissive to their husbands, so that the word of God may not be discredited.

Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. Show yourself in all respects a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, gravity, and sound speech that cannot be censured; then any opponent will be put to shame, having nothing evil to say of us.

Tell slaves to be submissive to their masters and to give satisfaction in every respect; they are not to talk back, not to pilfer, but to show complete and perfect fidelity, so that in everything they may be an ornament to the doctrine of God our Savior.

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all, training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions, and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly, while we wait for the blessed hope and the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He it is who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

Declare these things; exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one look down on you.

John 1:35-42 - The next day John again was standing with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he exclaimed, "Look, here is the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where he was staying, and they remained with him that day. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon. One of the two who heard John speak and followed him was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). He brought Simon to Jesus, who looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter).

SATURDAY 30, 32 ♦ 42, 43

Deut. 7:17-26 - If you say to yourself, "These nations are more numerous than I; how can I dispossess them?" do not be afraid of them. Just remember what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt, the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs and wonders, the mighty hand and the outstretched arm by which the LORD your God brought you out. The LORD your God will do the same to all the peoples of whom you are afraid. Moreover, the LORD your God will send the pestilence against them, until even the survivors and the fugitives are destroyed. Have no dread of them, for the LORD your God, who is present with you, is a great and awesome God. The LORD your God will clear away these nations before you little by little; you will not be able to make a quick end of them, otherwise the wild animals would become too numerous for you. But the LORD your God will give them over to you, and throw them into great panic, until they are destroyed. He will hand their kings over to you and you shall blot out their name from under heaven; no one will be able to stand against you, until you have destroyed them. The images of their gods you shall burn with fire. Do not covet the silver or the gold that is on them and take it for yourself, because you could be ensnared by it; for it is abhorrent to the LORD your God. Do not

bring an abhorrent thing into your house, or you will be set apart for destruction like it. You must utterly detest and abhor it, for it is set apart for destruction.

Ezek. 39:21-29 - I will display my glory among the nations; and all the nations shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid on them. The house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God, from that day forward. And the nations shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity, because they dealt treacherously with me. So I hid my face from them and gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and they all fell by the sword. I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their transgressions, and hid my face from them.

Therefore thus says the Lord GOD: Now I will restore the fortunes of Jacob, and have mercy on the whole house of Israel; and I will be jealous for my holy name. They shall forget their shame, and all the treachery they have practiced against me, when they live securely in their land with no one to make them afraid, when I have brought them back from the peoples and gathered them from their enemies' lands, and through them have displayed my holiness in the sight of many nations. Then they shall know that I am the LORD their God because I sent them into exile among the nations, and then gathered them into their own land. I will leave none of them behind; and I will never again hide my face from them, when I pour out my spirit upon the house of Israel, says the Lord GOD.

Titus 3:1-15 - Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show every courtesy to everyone. For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, despicable, hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The saying is sure. I desire that you insist on these things, so that those who have come to believe in God may be careful to devote themselves to good works; these things are excellent and profitable to everyone. But avoid stupid controversies, genealogies, dissensions, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and worthless. After a first and second admonition, have nothing more to do with anyone who causes divisions, since you know that such a person is perverted and sinful, being self-condemned.

When I send Artemas to you, or Tychicus, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, for I have decided to spend the winter there. Make every effort to send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way, and see that they lack nothing. And let people learn to devote themselves to good works in order to meet urgent needs, so that they may not be unproductive.

All who are with me send greetings to you. Greet those who love us in the faith. Grace be with all of you.

John 1:43-51 - The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him about whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus son of Joseph from Nazareth." Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him, he said of him, "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit!" Nathanael asked him, "Where did you get to know me?" Jesus answered, "I saw you under the fig tree before Philip called you." Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Jesus answered, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these." And he said to him, "Very truly, I tell you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man."