

# Suggested Readings for the Celebration of the Sacrament of Reconciliation for the First Time

Possible Readings from The Catholic Children's Bible

(referenced in Grow in Love)

## FIRST READING

### **A Reading from the prophet Isaiah Isaiah 43:1-3**

Israel, the Lord who created you says,  
'Do not be afraid – I will save you.  
I have called you by name – you are mine.

When you pass through deep waters, I will be  
with you;  
your troubles will not overwhelm you.

When you pass through fire, you will not be  
burned;  
the hard trials that come will not hurt you.

For I am the Lord your God, the holy God of  
Israel, who saves you.

The Word of the Lord.

### **A Reading from the First Letter of John 1 John 4:7-8, 11-12**

Dear friends, let us love one another, because love  
comes from God.

Whoever loves is a child of God and knows God.

Whoever does not love does not know God, for  
God is love.

Dear friends, if this is how God loved us, then  
we should love one another. No one has ever seen  
God, but if we love one another, God lives in union  
with us, and his love is made perfect in us.

The Word of the Lord.

### **A Reading from the First Letter of St Paul to the Corinthians 1 Corinthians 13:4-8**

Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or  
conceited or proud; love is not ill-mannered or  
selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of  
wrongs; love is not happy with evil, but is happy  
with the truth. Love never gives up; and its faith,  
hope, and patience never fail.

The Word of the Lord.

## GOSPEL READING

### **John 13:34-35**

[Jesus said] 'And now I give you a new commandment: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. If you have love for one another, then everyone will know that you are my disciples.'

### **Matthew 18:12-14**

[Jesus said] 'What do you think a man does who has one hundred sheep and one of them gets lost? He will leave the other ninety-nine grazing on the hillside and go and look after the lost sheep. When he finds it, I tell you, he feels far happier over this one sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not get lost. In just the same way your Father in heaven does not want any of these little ones to be lost.'

### **Luke 19:1-9**

Jesus went on into Jericho and was passing through. There was a chief tax collector there named Zacchaeus, who was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but he was a little man and could not see Jesus because of the crowd. So he ran ahead of the crowd and climbed up a sycamore tree to see Jesus, who was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to that place, he looked up and said to Zacchaeus, 'Hurry down, Zacchaeus, because I must stay in your house today.'

Zacchaeus hurried down and welcomed him with great joy. All the people who saw it started grumbling, 'This man has gone as a guest to the house of a sinner!'

At dinner, Zacchaeus stood up and said to Jesus, 'Listen, sir! I will give half my belongings to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone, I will pay back four times as much.'

# The Rite of Penance

The Rite of Penance includes a celebration of the Word. As this does not take place during Mass, the order of readings need not be as in the Liturgy of the Word at Mass. If there are several readings, a psalm or other appropriate song or a period of silence should intervene between them. If there is only one reading, it is preferable that it be from a Gospel.

The following readings are proposed as a help for priests and others involved in the selection of readings. For diversity, and according to the pastoral needs of the group that is celebrating, other readings may be selected. Suggestions for presentation of the Word during the Rite of Penance will be found in the celebrant's edition of the Rite.

## OLD TESTAMENT READING

### 1

#### **A reading from the book of Genesis 3:1-19**

*She took some of its fruit and ate it.*

The serpent was the most subtle of all the wild beasts that the Lord God had made. It asked the woman, 'Did God really say you were not to eat from any of the trees in the garden?' The woman answered the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees in the garden. But of the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden God said, "You must not eat it, nor touch it, under pain of death".' Then the serpent said to the woman, 'No! You will not die! God knows in fact that on the day you eat it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil.' The woman saw that the tree was good to eat and pleasing to the eye, and that it was desirable for the knowledge that it could give. So she took some of its fruit and ate it. She gave some also to her husband who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened and they realised that they were naked. So they sewed fig-leaves together to make themselves loin-cloths.

The man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man. 'Where are you?' he asked. 'I heard the sound of you in the garden,' he replied 'I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid.' 'Who told you that you were naked?' he asked. 'Have you been eating of the tree I forbade you to eat?' The man replied, 'It was the woman you put with me; she gave me the fruit, and I ate it'. Then the Lord God asked the woman, 'What is this you have done?' The woman replied, 'The serpent tempted me and I ate.'

Then the Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this,

'Be accursed beyond all cattle,  
all wild beasts.  
You shall crawl on your belly and eat dust  
every day of your life.  
I will make you enemies of each other:  
you and the woman,  
your offspring and her offspring.  
It will crush your head  
and you will strike its heel.'

To the woman he said:

'I will multiply your pains in childbearing,  
you shall give birth to your children in pain.  
Your yearning shall be for your husband  
yet he will lord it over you.'

To the man he said, 'Because you listened to the  
voice of your wife and ate from the tree of which I  
had forbidden you to eat,

'Accursed be the soil because of you.  
With suffering shall you get your food from it  
every day of your life.  
It shall yield you brambles and thistles  
and you shall eat wild plants.  
With sweat on your brow  
shall you eat your bread  
until you return to the soil  
as you were taken from it.  
For dust you are,  
and to dust you shall return.'

This is the word of the Lord.

**A reading from the book of Genesis****4:1-15***Cain set on his brother Abel and killed him.*

The man had intercourse with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain. 'I have acquired a man with the help of the Lord' she said. She gave birth to a second child, Abel, the brother of Cain. Now Abel became a shepherd and kept flocks while Cain tilled the soil. Time passed and Cain brought some of the produce of the soil as an offering for the Lord, while Abel for his part brought the first-born of his flock and some of their fat as well. The Lord looked with favour on Abel and his offering. But he did not look with favour on Cain and his offering and Cain was very angry and downcast. The Lord asked Cain, 'Why are you angry and downcast? If you are well disposed, ought you not to lift up your head? But if you are ill disposed, is not sin at the door like a crouching beast hungering for you, which you must master?' Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let us go out'; and while they were in the open country, Cain set on his brother Abel and killed him.

The Lord asked Cain, 'Where is your brother Abel?' 'I do not know' he replied. 'Am I my brother's guardian?' 'What have you done?' the Lord asked. 'Listen to the sound of your brother's blood, crying out to me from the ground. Now be accursed and driven from the ground that has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood at your hands. When you till the ground it shall no longer yield you any of its produce. You shall be a fugitive and a wanderer over the earth.' Then Cain said to the Lord, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear. See! Today you drive me from this ground. I must hide from you, and be a fugitive and a wanderer over the earth. Why, whoever comes across me will kill me!' 'Very well, then,' the Lord replied 'if anyone kills Cain, sevenfold vengeance shall be taken for him.' So the Lord put a mark on Cain, to prevent whoever might come across him from striking him down.

This is the word of the Lord.

## 3

**A reading from the book of Genesis****18:17-33***The Lord said, 'I will not destroy the whole city for the sake of ten just men.'*

The Lord had wondered, 'Shall I conceal from Abraham what I am going to do, seeing that Abraham will become a great nation with all the nations of the earth blessing themselves by him? For I have singled him out to command his sons

and his household after him to maintain the way of the Lord by just and upright living. In this way the Lord will carry out for Abraham what he has promised him.' Then the Lord said, 'How great an outcry there is against Sodom and Gomorrah! How grievous is their sin! I propose to go down and. See whether or not they have done all that is alleged in the outcry against them that has come up to me. I am determined to know.'

The men left there and went to Sodom while Abraham remained standing before the Lord. Approaching him he said, 'Are you really going to destroy the just man with the sinner? Perhaps there are fifty just men in the town. Will you really overwhelm them, will you not spare the place for the fifty just men in it? Do not think of doing such a thing: to kill the just man with the sinner, treating just and sinner alike! Do not think of it! Will the judge of the whole earth not administer justice?' The Lord replied, 'If at Sodom I find fifty just men in the town, I will spare the whole place because of them.'

Abraham replied, 'I am bold indeed to speak like this to my Lord, I who am dust and ashes. But perhaps the fifty just men lack five: will you destroy the whole city for five?' 'No,' he replied 'I will not destroy it if I find forty-five just men there.' Again Abraham said to him, 'Perhaps there will only be forty there'. 'I will not do it' he replied, 'for the sake of the forty.'

Abraham said, 'I trust my Lord will not be angry, but give me leave to speak: perhaps there will be only thirty there.' 'I will not do it' he replied 'if I find thirty there.' He said, 'I am bold indeed to speak like this, but perhaps there will only be twenty there.' 'I will not destroy it' he replied 'for the sake of the twenty.' He said, 'I trust my Lord will not be angry if I speak once more: perhaps there will only be ten.' 'I will not destroy it' he replied 'for the sake of the ten.' When he had finished talking to Abraham the Lord went away, and Abraham returned home.

This is the word of the Lord.

## 4

**A reading from the book of Exodus****17:1-17***They put the Lord to the test by saying, 'Is the Lord with us, or not?'*

The whole community of the sons of Israel moved from their camp in the desert of Zin at the Lord's command, to travel the further stages; and they pitched camp at Rephidim where there was no water for the people to drink. So they grumbled against Moses. 'Give us water to drink' they said. Moses answered them, 'Why do you grumble against me? Why do you put the Lord to the test?'

But tormented by thirst, the people complained against Moses. 'Why did you bring us out of Egypt?' they said. 'Was it so that I should die of thirst, my children too, and my cattle?' Moses appealed to the Lord. 'How am I to deal with this people?' he said. 'A little more and they will stone me!' The Lord said to Moses, 'Take with you some of the elders of Israel and move on to the forefront of the people; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the river, and go. I shall be standing before you there on the rock, at Horeb. You must strike the rock, and water will flow from it for the people to drink.' This is what Moses did, in the sight of the elders of Israel. The place was named Massah and Meribah because of the grumbling of the sons of Israel and because they put the Lord to the test by saying, 'Is the Lord with us, or not?'

This is the word of the Lord.

## 5

### **A reading from the book of Exodus 20:1-21**

*I am the Lord your God ... you shall have no other gods.*

God spoke all these words to Moses. 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 gods except me.

'You shall not make yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything in heaven or on earth beneath or in the waters under the earth; you shall not bow down to them? or serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God and I punish the father's fault in the sons, the grandsons, and the great-grandsons of those who hate me; but I show kindness to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

'You shall not utter the name of the Lord your God to misuse it, for the Lord will not leave unpunished the man who utters his name to misuse it.

'Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. For six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath for the Lord your God. You shall do no work that day, neither you nor your son nor your daughter nor your servants, men or women, nor your animals nor the stranger who lives with you. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth and the sea and all that these hold but on the seventh day he rested; that is why the Lord has blessed the sabbath day and made it sacred.

'Honour your father and your mother so that you may have a long life in the land that the Lord your God has given to you.

'You shall not kill.

'You shall not commit adultery.

'You shall not steal.

'You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

'You shall not covet your neighbour's house.

You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his servant, man or woman, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is his.'

All the people shook with fear at the peals of thunder and the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the smoking mountain; and they kept their distance. 'Speak to us yourself' they said to Moses 'and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we shall die.' Moses answered the people, 'Do not be afraid; God has come to test you, so that your fear of him, being always in your mind, may keep you from sinning.' So the people kept their distance while Moses approached the dark cloud where God was.

This is the word of the Lord.

## 6

### **A reading from the book of Deuteronomy 6:4-9**

*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart.*

Moses said to the people: 'Listen, Israel: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength. Let these words I urge on you today be written on your heart. You shall repeat them to your children and say them over to them whether at rest in your house or walking abroad, at your lying down or at your rising; you shall fasten them on your hand as a sign and on your forehead as a circlet; you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.'

This is the word of the Lord.

## 7

### **A reading from the book of Deuteronomy 9:7-19**

*Your people have been quick to leave the way I marked out for them.*

Moses said to the people: 'Remember; never forget how you provoked the Lord your God in the wilderness. From the day you came out of the land of Egypt you have been rebels against the Lord. At Horeb you provoked the Lord, and the Lord was so angry with you that he was ready to destroy you. I had gone up the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant that the Lord was making with you. I stayed forty days and forty nights on the mountain, eating no bread, drinking no water. The Lord gave me the two stone tablets

inscribed by the finger of God, and all the words on them that the Lord had spoken to you on the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the Assembly. At the end of the forty days and forty nights, after he had given me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant, the Lord said to me, "Leave this place, go down quickly, for your people whom you brought out of Egypt have broken faith. They have been quick to leave the way I marked out for them; they have made themselves an idol of cast metal." Then the Lord said to me, "I have seen this people, and what a headstrong people they are! Let me destroy them, and wipe out their name from under heaven, and make out of you a nation mightier and greater than they."

'So I went down the mountain again and it was blazing with fire, and in my hands were the two tablets of the covenant. And I looked and there you were, you had been sinning against the Lord you God. You had made yourself a calf of cast metal; you had been quick to leave the way the Lord marked out for you. I seized the two tablets and with my two hands threw them down, and broke them before your eyes. Then I fell prostrate before the Lord; as before, I passed forty days and forty nights eating no bread and drinking no water, for all the sin you had committed in doing what was displeasing to the Lord, thus arousing his anger. For I was afraid of this anger, of the fury which so roused the Lord against you that he was ready to destroy you. And once more the Lord heard my prayer.'

This is the word of the Lord.

## 8

### **A reading from the book of Deuteronomy 30:15-20**

*See, today I set before you life and prosperity,  
death and disaster.*

Moses said to the people: 'See, today I set before you life and prosperity, death and disaster. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I enjoin on you today, if you love the Lord you God and follow his ways, if you keep his commandments, his laws, his customs, you will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you are entering to make your own. But if your heart strays, if you refuse to listen, if you let yourself be drawn into worshipping other gods and serving them, I tell you today, you will most certainly perish; you will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today: I set before you life or death, blessing or curse. Choose life, then, so that you and your descendants may live, in the love of the Lord your God, obeying his voice, clinging to him; for

in this your life consists, and on this depends your long stay in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob he would give them.'

This is the word of the Lord.

## 9

### **A reading from the second book of Samuel 12:1-9. 13**

*David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the Lord.' Then Nathan said to David, 'The Lord, for his part, forgives your sin; you are not to die.'*

The Lord sent Nathan the prophet to David. He came to him and said:

'In the same town were two men,  
one rich, the other poor.  
The rich man had flocks and herds  
in great abundance;  
the poor man had nothing but a ewe lamb,  
one only, a small one he had bought.  
This he fed, and it grew up with him and his children,  
eating his bread, drinking from his cup,  
sleeping on his breast; it was like a daughter to him.  
When there came a traveller to stay, the rich man  
refused to take one of his own flock or herd  
to provide for the wayfarer who had come to him.  
Instead he took the poor man's lamb  
and prepared it for his guest.'

David's anger flared up against the man. 'As the Lord lives,' he said to Nathan 'the man who did this deserves to die! He must make fourfold restitution for the lamb, for doing such a thing and showing no compassion.'

Then Nathan said to David, 'You are the man. The Lord the God of Israel says this, "I anointed you king over Israel; I delivered you from the hands of Saul; I gave your master's house to you, his wives into your arms; I gave you the House of Israel and Judah; and if this were not enough, I would add as much again for you. Why have you shown contempt for the Lord, doing what displeases him? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword, taken his wife for your own, and killed him with the sword of the Ammonites."

David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the Lord.' Then Nathan said to David, 'The Lord, for his part, forgives your sin; you are not to die.'

This is the word of the Lord.

**A reading from the prophet Nehemiah  
9:1-20**

*The Israelites assembled for a fast and  
confessed their sins.*

On the twenty-fourth day of the seventh month the Israelites, in sackcloth and with dust on their heads, assembled for a fast. Those of Israelite stock separated themselves from all those of foreign origin; they stood confessing their sins and the transgressions of their ancestors. Standing, each man in his right position, they read from the Book of the Law of the Lord their God for one quarter of the day; for another quarter they confessed their sins and prostrated themselves before the Lord their God. On the Levites' platform stood Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani and Chenani, calling loudly to the Lord their God; and the Levites, Jeshua, Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabneiah, Sherebiah, Hodiah, Shebaniah and Pethahiah said, 'Arise and bless the Lord our God.'

Blessed be you, Lord our God,  
from everlasting to everlasting.  
And blessed be your name of glory  
that surpasses all blessing and praise.

Lord God, you are the only one.  
You made the heavens, the heaven of heavens,  
with all their  
array,  
the earth and all it bears,  
the seas and all they hold.  
To all of these you give life  
and the array of the heavens bows down before  
you.

Lord, you are the God  
who chose Abram,  
brought him out from Ur in Chaldea,  
and gave him the name of Abraham.  
Finding him faithful of heart before you,  
you made a covenant with him,  
to give him the land of the Canaanite  
of the Hittite and Amorite,  
of the Perizzite, Jebusite, Girgashite,  
to him and his posterity.  
And you kept your promise  
because you are just.

You saw the distress of our fathers in Egypt,  
you heard their cry by the Sea of Reeds.  
You worked portents and miracles against  
Pharaoh,  
against his servants and all the people of his  
land;  
for you knew how they treated them with  
arrogance.

You won a reputation which you keep to this  
day.

You divided the sea in front of them:  
they passed through the deep sea dry-shod.  
Into the depths you hurled their pursuers  
like a stone into rushing waters.  
With a pillar of cloud you led them by day,  
with a pillar of fire by night:  
to light the way ahead of them  
by which they should go.

You came down on Mount Sinai  
and spoke with them from heaven;  
you gave them  
ordinances that are just,  
laws that are sure,  
good statutes and commandments;  
you taught them to know  
your holy sabbath,  
laid down for them commandments, statutes  
and Law  
through Moses your servant.  
For their hunger you gave them bread from  
heaven  
for their thirst you brought them water spurting  
from the rock.

You bade them go in  
and take possession of the land  
that you had sworn  
to give them.  
But our fathers grew proud,  
were obstinate, and flouted your commands.  
They refused to obey, forgetful of the wonders  
that you had worked for them;  
they became obstinate, they even thought  
of going back to Egypt and their slavery.  
But you are a God of forgiveness,  
gracious and loving,  
slow to anger, abounding in goodness,  
you did not forsake them.

When they cast themselves a calf  
out of molten metal  
and said, 'This is your God  
who brought you up from Egypt'  
(and were guilty of grave blasphemies),  
you, so greatly loving,  
still did not forsake them in the wilderness:  
the pillar of cloud did not leave them  
that led them on their path by day,  
nor the pillar of fire by night,  
to light the way ahead of them  
by which they should go.  
You gave them your good spirit  
to make them wise,  
you did not withhold your manna from their  
mouths,  
you gave them water for their thirst.

This is the word of the Lord.

**A reading from the book of Wisdom  
1:1-16**

*Love virtue, since Wisdom will never make its way into a crafty soul nor stay in a body that is in debt to sin.*

Love virtue, you who are judges on earth,  
let honesty prompt your thinking about the Lord,  
seek him in simplicity of heart;  
since he is to be found by those who do not put him to the test,  
he shows himself to those who do not distrust him.  
But selfish intentions divorce from God;  
and Omnipotence, put to the test, confounds the foolish.

No, Wisdom will never make its way into a crafty soul  
nor stay in a body that is in debt to sin;  
the holy spirit of instruction shuns deceit,  
it stands aloof from reckless purposes,  
is taken aback when iniquity appears.

Wisdom is a spirit, a friend to man,  
though she will not pardon the words of a blasphemer,  
since God sees into the innermost parts of him,  
truly observes his heart,  
and listens to his tongue.  
The spirit of the Lord indeed fills the whole world,  
and that which holds all things together knows every word that is said.  
The man who gives voice to injustice will never go unnoticed,  
nor shall avenging Justice pass him by.  
For the godless man's deliberations will be examined,  
and a report of his words will reach the Lord to convict him of his crimes.  
There is a jealous ear that overhears everything,  
not so much as a murmur of complaint escapes it.  
Beware, then, of complaining about nothing,  
and keep your tongue from finding fault;  
since the most secret word will have repercussions,  
and a lying mouth deals death to the soul.

Do not court death by the errors of your ways,  
nor invite destruction through your own actions.  
Death was not God's doing,  
he takes no pleasure in the extinction of the living.  
To be – for this he created all;  
the world's created things have health in them,  
in them no fatal poison can be found,  
and Hades holds no power on earth;  
for virtue is undying.  
But the godless call with deed and word for Death,  
counting him friend, they wear themselves out for him  
with him they make a pact,  
and are fit to be his partners.

This is the word of the Lord.

**A reading from the book of Wisdom  
5:1-16**

*The hope of the godless is like chaff carried on the wind, but the virtuous live for ever.*

The virtuous man stands up boldly  
to face those who have oppressed him,  
those who thought so little of his sufferings.  
And they, at the sight of him, will shake with cowards' fear,  
amazed he should be saved so unexpectedly.  
Stricken with remorse, each will say to the other,  
say with a groan and in distress of spirit:

'This is the man we used to laugh at once,  
a butt for our sarcasm, fools that we were!  
His life we regarded as madness,  
his ending as without honour.  
How has he come to be counted as one of the sons of God?  
How does he come to be assigned a place among the saints?  
Clearly we have strayed from the way of truth;  
the light of justice has not shone for us,  
the sun never rose on us.  
We have left no path of lawlessness or ruin unexplored,  
we have crossed deserts where there was no track,  
but the way of the Lord is one we have never known.  
Arrogance, what advantage has this brought us?  
Wealth and boasting, what have these conferred on us?  
All those things have passed like a shadow,  
passed like a fleeting rumour.  
Like a ship that cuts through heaving heaving waves  
no trace to show where it has passed,  
no wake from its keel in the waves.  
Or like a bird flying through the air –  
leaving no proof of its passing;  
it whips the light air with the stroke of its pinions,  
tears it apart in its whirring rush,  
drives its way onward with sweeping wing,  
and afterwards no sign is seen of its passage.  
Or like an arrow shot at a mark,  
the pierced air closing so quickly on itself,  
there is no knowing which way the arrow has passed.  
So with us: scarcely born, we have ceased to be;  
of virtue not a trace have we to show  
we have spent ourselves on wickedness instead.'

Yes, the hope of the godless is like chaff carried on the wind  
like fine spray driven by the gale;



it disperses like smoke before the wind  
goes like the memory of a one-day guest.

But the virtuous live for ever  
their recompense lies with the Lord  
the Most High takes care of them.

This is the word of the Lord.

### 13

#### **A reading from the book of Ecclesiasticus**

**28:1-7**

*Forgive your neighbour the hurt he does you,  
and when you pray, your sins will be forgiven.*

He who exacts vengeance will experience the  
vengeance of the Lord,  
who keeps strict account of sin.  
Forgive your neighbour the hurt he does you,  
and when you pray, your sins will be forgiven.  
If a man nurses anger against another  
can he then demand compassion from the Lord?  
Showing no pity for a man like himself  
can he then plead for his own sins?  
Mere creature of flesh, he cherishes resentment.  
who will forgive him his sins?  
Remember the last things, and stop hating,  
remember dissolution and death, and live by the  
commandments.

This is the word of the Lord.

### 14

#### **A reading from the prophet Isaiah**

**1:2-6. 15-18**

*I reared sons, I brought them up, but they  
have rebelled against me.*

Listen, you heavens; earth, attend  
for the Lord is speaking,  
'I reared sons, I brought them up,  
but they have rebelled against me.  
The ox knows its owner  
and the ass its master's crib,  
Israel knows nothing,  
my people understands nothing.

'A sinful nation, a people weighed down with guilt,  
a breed of wrong-doers, perverted sons.  
They have abandoned the Lord, despised the Holy  
One of Israel,  
they have turned away from him.

'Where shall I strike you next,  
since you heap one betrayal on another?  
The whole head is sick, the whole heart grown  
faint;  
from the sole of the foot to the head there is not a

sound spot:  
wounds, bruises, open sores  
not dressed, not bandaged,  
not soothed with oil.

'When you stretch out your hands  
I turn my eyes away.  
You may multiply your prayers,  
I shall not listen.  
Your hands are covered with blood,  
wash, make yourselves clean.

'Take your wrong-doing out of my sight.  
Cease to do evil.  
Learn to do good,  
search for justice,  
help the oppressed,  
be just to the orphan,  
plead for the widow.

'Come now, let us talk this over,'  
says the Lord.  
'Though your sins are like scarlet,  
they shall be as white as snow;  
though they are red as crimson,  
they shall be like wool'

This is the word of the Lord.

### 15

#### **A reading from the prophet Isaiah**

**5:1-7**

*My friend had a vineyard. He expected it to  
yield grapes, but sour grapes were all that it  
gave.*

Let me sing to my friend  
the song of his love for his vineyard.  
My friend had a vineyard  
on a fertile hillside.  
He dug the soil, cleared it of stone,  
and planted choice vines in it.  
In the middle he built a tower,  
he dug a press there too.  
He expected it to yield grapes,  
but sour grapes were all that it gave.

And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem  
and men of Judah,  
I ask you to judge  
between my vineyard and me.  
What could I have done for my vineyard  
that I have not done?  
I expected it to yield grapes.  
Why did it yield sour grapes instead?

Very well, I will tell you  
what I am going to do to my vineyard:  
I will take away its hedge for it to be grazed on,

and knock down its wall for it to be trampled on.  
I will lay it waste, unpruned, undug;  
overgrown by the briar and the thorn.  
I will command the clouds  
to rain no rain on it.  
Yes, the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts  
is the House of Israel,  
and the men of Judah  
that chosen plant.  
He expected justice, but found bloodshed  
integrity, but only a cry of distress.

This is the word of the Lord.

## 16

### **A reading from the prophet Isaiah 43:22-28**

*I it is, I it is, who must blot out everything.*

Thus says the Lord:

Jacob, you have not invoked me,  
you have not troubled yourself, Israel, on my  
behalf.  
You have not brought me your sheep for  
holocausts,  
nor honoured me with sacrifices.  
I have never burdened you with oblations,  
nor troubled you for incense.  
You have spent no money on fragrant cane for  
me,  
you have not filled me with the fat of your  
sacrifices.  
Instead you have burdened me with your sins,  
troubled me with your iniquities.  
I it is, I it is, who must blot out everything  
and not remember your sins.

Cast your mind back, let us judge this together;  
state your own case and prove your innocence.  
Your first father sinned,  
your mediators have rebelled against me.  
Your princes have profaned my sanctuary.  
So I have handed Jacob over to the ban,  
and Israel to insults.

This is the word of the Lord.

## 17

### **A reading from the prophet Isaiah 53:1-12**

*The Lord burdened him with the sins of all of  
us.*

'Who could believe what we have heard,  
and to whom has the power of the Lord been  
revealed?'  
Like a sapling he grew up in front of us,

like a root in arid ground.  
Without beauty, without majesty (we saw him),  
no looks to attract our eyes;  
a thing despised and rejected by men,  
a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering,  
a man to make people screen their faces;  
he was despised and we took no account of him.

And yet ours were the sufferings he bore,  
ours the sorrows he carried.  
But we, we thought of him as someone punished,  
struck by God, and brought low.  
Yet he was pierced through for our faults,  
crushed for our sins.  
On him lies a punishment that brings us peace,  
and through his wounds we are healed.

We had all gone astray like sheep,  
each taking his own way,  
and the Lord burdened him  
with the sins of all of us.  
Harshly dealt with, he bore it humbly,  
he never opened his mouth,  
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter-house,  
like a sheep that is dumb before its shearers  
never opening its mouth.

By force and by law he was taken;  
would anyone plead his cause?  
Yes, he was torn away from the land of the living;  
for our faults struck down in death.  
They gave him a grave with the wicked,  
a tomb with the rich,  
though he had done no wrong  
and there had been no perjury in his mouth.  
The Lord has been pleased to crush him with  
suffering.  
If he offers his life in atonement,  
he shall see his heirs, he shall have a long life  
and through him what the Lord wishes will be done.  
His soul's anguish over  
he shall see the light and be content.  
By his sufferings shall my servant justify many,  
taking their faults on himself.

Hence I will grant whole hordes for his tribute  
he shall divide the spoil with the mighty,  
for surrendering himself to death  
and letting himself be taken for a sinner,  
while he was bearing the faults of many  
and praying all the time for sinners.

This is the word of the Lord.

**A reading from the prophet Isaiah  
55:1-11**

*Let the wicked man abandon his way. Let him  
turn back to the Lord who will take pity on  
him, for he is rich in forgiving.*

Thus says the Lord:

Oh, come to the water all you who are thirsty;  
though you have no money, come!  
Buy corn without money, and eat,  
and, at no cost, wine and milk.  
Why spend money on what is not bread,  
your wages on what fails to satisfy?  
Listen, listen to me, and you will have good  
things to eat  
and rich food to enjoy.  
Pay attention, come to me;  
listen, and your soul will live.

With you I will make an everlasting covenant  
out of the favours promised to David.  
See, I have made of you a witness to the  
peoples,  
a leader and a master of the nations.  
See, you will summon a nation you never knew,  
those unknown will come hurrying to you,  
for the sake of the Lord your God,  
of the Holy One of Israel who will glorify you.

Seek the Lord while he is still to be found,  
call to him while he is still near.  
Let the wicked man abandon his way,  
the evil man his thoughts.  
Let him turn back to the Lord who will take pity  
on him,  
to our God who is rich in forgiving;  
for my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
my ways are not your ways – it is the Lord who  
speaks.  
Yes, the heavens are as high above the earth  
as my ways are above your ways,  
my thoughts above your thoughts.

Yes, as the rain and the snow come down from the  
heavens and do not return without watering the  
earth, making it yield and giving growth to provide  
seed for the sower and bread for the eating, so the  
word that goes from my mouth does not return  
to me empty, without carrying out my will and  
succeeding in what it was sent to do.

This is the word of the Lord.

**A reading from the prophet Isaiah  
58:1-11**

*If you give your bread to the hungry, and  
relief to the oppressed, your light will rise in  
the darkness, and your shadows become like  
noon.*

Thus says the Lord:

Shout for all you are worth,  
raise your voice like a trumpet.  
Proclaim their faults to my people,  
their sins to the House of Jacob.

They see me day after day,  
they long to know my ways,  
like a nation that wants to act with integrity  
and not ignore the law of its God.

They ask me for laws that are just,  
they long for God to draw near:  
'Why should we fast if you never see it,  
why do penance if you never notice?'

Look, you do business on your fast days,  
you oppress all your workmen;  
look, you quarrel and squabble when you fast  
and strike the poor man with your fist.

Fasting like yours today  
will never make your voice heard on high.  
Is that the sort of fast that pleases me,  
a truly penitential day for men?

Hanging your head like a reed  
lying down on sackcloth and ashes?  
Is that what you call fasting,  
a day acceptable to the Lord?

Is not this the sort of fast that pleases me  
– it is the Lord who speaks –  
to break unjust fetters  
and undo the thongs of the yoke,

to let the oppressed go free,  
and break every yoke,  
to share your bread with the hungry,  
and shelter the homeless poor,

to clothe the man you see to be naked  
and not turn from your own kin?  
Then will your light shine like the dawn  
and your wound be quickly healed over.

Your integrity will go before you  
and the glory of the Lord behind you.  
Cry, and the Lord will answer;  
call, and he will say, 'I am here'.

If you do away with the yoke,  
the clenched fist, the wicked word,  
if you give your bread to the hungry,  
and relief to the oppressed,

your light will rise in the darkness,  
and your shadows become like noon.  
The Lord will always guide you,  
giving you relief in desert places.

He will give strength to your bones  
and you shall be like a watered garden,  
like a spring of water  
whose waters never run dry.

You will rebuild the ancient ruins,  
build up on the old foundations.  
You will be called 'Breach-mender',  
'Restorer of ruined houses'.

This is the word of the Lord.

## 20

### **A reading from the prophet Isaiah 59:1-4.9-15**

*Your iniquities have made a gulf between you  
and your God.*

No, the hand of the Lord is not too short to save,  
nor his ear too dull to hear.  
But your iniquities have made a gulf  
between you and your God.  
Your sins have made him veil his face  
so as not to hear you,  
since your hands are stained with blood,  
your fingers with crime,  
your lips utter lies,  
your tongues murmur treachery.  
No one makes just accusations  
or pleads sincerely.  
All rely on nothingness, utter falsehood,  
conceive harm and give birth to misery.

So justice is removed far away from us,  
and integrity keeps its distance.  
We looked for light and all is darkness,  
for brightness and we walk in the dark.  
Like the blind we feel our way along walls  
and hesitate like men without eyes.  
We stumble as though noon were twilight  
and dwell in the dark like the dead.  
We growl, all of us, like bears,  
and moan like doves,  
waiting for the justice that never comes,  
for salvation that is removed far away from us.

For our faults in your sight have been many  
and our sins are a witness against us.

And indeed our faults are present to our minds,  
and we know our iniquities:  
rebellion and denial of the Lord,  
turning our back on our God,  
talking treachery and revolt,  
murmuring lies in our heart.

Justice is withheld  
and integrity stands aloof;  
in the public square sincerity is brought to its  
knees  
and uprightness forbidden to enter.  
Sincerity is missing  
and he who avoids evil is robbed.  
The Lord has seen this, and is indignant  
that there is no justice to be seen.

This is the word of the Lord.

## 21

### **A reading from the prophet Jeremiah 2:1-13**

*My people have committed a double crime:  
they have abandoned me, the fountain  
of living water, only to dig cisterns for  
themselves, leaky cisterns that hold no water.*

The word of the Lord was addressed to me, saying,  
'Go and shout this in the hearing of Jerusalem:

"The Lord says this:  
I remember the affection of your youth,  
the love of your bridal days:  
you followed me through the wilderness,  
through a land unsown.  
Israel was sacred to the Lord,  
the first-fruits of his harvest;  
anyone who ate of this had to pay for it,  
misfortune came to them -  
it is the Lord who speaks".'

Listen to the word of the Lord, House of Jacob,  
and all you families of the House of Israel.  
Thus says the Lord,

'What shortcoming did your fathers find in me  
that led them to desert me?  
Vanity they pursued,  
vanity they became.  
They never said, "Where is the Lord,  
who brought us out of the land of Egypt  
and led us through the wilderness,  
through a land arid and scorched,  
a land of drought and darkness,  
a land where no one passes,  
and no man lives?"  
I brought you to a fertile country  
to enjoy its produce and good things;  
but no sooner had you entered than you defiled  
my land,

and made my heritage detestable.  
 The priests have never asked, "Where is the Lord?"  
 Those who administer the Law have no knowledge of me.  
 The shepherds have rebelled against me; the prophets have prophesied in the name of Baal, following things with no power in them. So I must put you on trial once more – it is the Lord who speaks – and your children's children too. Now take ship for the islands of Kittim or send to Kedar to enquire. Take careful notice and observe if anything like this has happened. Does a nation change its gods? – and these are not gods at all! Yet my people have exchanged their Glory for what has no power in it. You heavens, stand aghast at this, stand stupefied, stand utterly appalled – it is the Lord who speaks. Since my people have committed a double crime: they have abandoned me, the fountain of living water, only to dig cisterns for themselves, leaky cisterns that hold no water.'

This is the word of the Lord.

## 22

### A reading from the prophet Jeremiah 7:21-26

*Listen to my voice, then I will be your God and you shall be my people.*

'The Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, says this: Add your holocausts to your sacrifices and eat all the meat. For when I brought your ancestors out of the land of Egypt, I said nothing to them, gave them no orders, about holocaust and sacrifice. These were my orders: Listen to my voice, then I will be your God and you shall be my people. Follow right to the end the way that I mark out for you, and you will prosper. But they did not listen, they did not pay attention; they followed the dictates of their own evil hearts, refused to face me, and turned their backs on me. From the day your ancestors came out of the land of Egypt until today, day after day I have persistently sent you all my servants the prophets. But they have not listened to me, have not paid attention; they have grown stubborn and behaved worse than their ancestors.'

This is the word of the Lord.

## 23

### A reading from the prophet Ezekiel 11:14-21

*I will remove the heart of stone from their bodies and give them a heart of flesh instead, so that they will keep my laws.*

The word of the Lord was addressed to me as follows:

'Son of man, your brothers, your kinsmen, the whole House of Israel, these are told by the citizens of Jerusalem, "You have been sent away from the Lord; it is to us that the land was given as our domain." Say therefore, "The Lord says this: Yes, I have sent them far away among the nations and I have dispersed them to foreign countries; and for a while I have been a sanctuary for them in the country to which they have gone". Then say, "The Lord says this: I will gather you together from the peoples, I will bring you all back from the countries where you have been scattered and I will give you the land of Israel. They will come and will purge it of all the horrors and the filthy practices. I will give them a single heart and I will put a new spirit in them; I will remove the heart of stone from their bodies and give them a heart of flesh instead, so that they will keep my laws and respect my observances and put them into practice. Then they shall be my people and I will be their God. But those whose hearts are set on their idols and their filthy practices I will call to account for their conduct – it is the Lord who speaks".'

This is the word of the Lord.

## 24

### A reading from the prophet Ezekiel 18:20-32

*If the wicked man renounces all his sins, he will certainly live; he will not die.*

The Lord says this:

'The man who has sinned is the one who must die; a son is not to suffer for the sins of his father, nor a father for the sins of his son. To the upright man his integrity will be credited, to the wicked his wickedness.

'But if the wicked man renounces all the sins he has committed, respects my laws and is law-abiding and honest he will certainly live; he will not die. All the sins he committed will be forgotten from then on; he shall live because of the integrity he has practised. What! Am I likely to take pleasure in the death of a wicked man – it is the Lord who speaks – and not prefer to see him renounce his wickedness and live?

'But if the upright man renounces his integrity, commits sin, copies the wicked man and practises

every kind of filth, is he to live? All the integrity he has practised shall be forgotten from then on; but this is because he himself has broken faith and committed sin, and for this he shall die. But you object, "What the Lord does is unjust". Listen, you House of Israel: is what I do unjust? Is it not what you do that is unjust? When the upright man renounces his integrity to commit sin and dies because of this, he dies because of the evil that he himself has committed. When the sinner renounces sin to become law-abiding and honest, he deserves to live. He has chosen to renounce all his previous sins; he shall certainly live; he shall not die. And yet the House of Israel objects, "What the Lord does is unjust". Is what I do unjust, you House of Israel? Is it not what you do that is unjust? House of Israel, in future I mean to judge each of you by what he does – it is the Lord who speaks. Repent, renounce all your sins, avoid all occasions of sin! Shake off all the sins you have committed against me, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why are you so anxious to die, House of Israel? I take no pleasure in the death of anyone – it is the Lord who speaks. Repent and live!

This is the word of the Lord.

## 25

### A reading from the prophet Ezekiel 36:23-28

*I shall pour clean water over you; I shall put my spirit in you, and make you keep my laws.*

The Lord says this:

'I mean to display the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, which you have profaned among them. And the nations will learn that I am the Lord – it is the Lord who speaks – when I display my holiness for your sake before their eyes. Then I am going to take you from among the nations and gather you together from all the foreign countries, and bring you home to your own land. I shall pour clean water over you and you will be cleansed; I shall cleanse you of all your defilement and all your idols. I shall give you a new heart, and put a new spirit in you; I shall remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh instead. I shall put my spirit in you, and make you keep my laws and sincerely respect my observances. You will live in the land which I gave your ancestors. You shall be my people and I will be your God.'

This is the word of the Lord.

### A reading from the prophet Hosea

#### 2:18-25

*When that day comes I will make a treaty on her behalf*

When that day comes – it is the Lord who speaks – she will call me, 'My husband', no longer will she call me, 'My Baal'. I will take the names of the Baals off her lips, their names shall never be uttered again.

When that day comes I will make a treaty on her behalf  
with the wild animals,  
with the birds of heaven and the creeping things of the earth;  
I will break bow, sword and battle in the country, and make her sleep secure.  
I will betroth you to myself for ever,  
betroth you with integrity and justice,  
with tenderness and love;  
I will betroth you to myself with faithfulness and you will come to know the Lord. '

When that day comes – it is the Lord who speaks – the heavens will have their answer from me the earth its answer from them, the grain, the wine, the oil, their answer from the earth, and Jezreel his answer from them. I will sow him in the country, I will love Unloved.

This is the word of the Lord.

## 27

### A reading from the prophet Hosea

#### 11:1-11

*I took them in my arms; yet they have not understood that I was the one looking after them.*

The Lord says this:

When Israel was a child I loved him and I called my son out of Egypt. But the more I called to them, the further they went from me; they have offered sacrifice to the Baals and set their offerings smoking before the idols. I myself taught Ephraim to walk, I took them in my arms; yet they have not understood that I was the one looking after them. I led them with reins of kindness with leading-strings of love.

I was like someone who lifts an infant close against his cheek; stooping down to him I gave him his food. They will have to go back to Egypt, Assyria must be their king, because they have refused to return to me. The sword will rage through their towns wiping out their children, glutting itself inside their fortresses. My people are diseased through their disloyalty; they call on Baal, but he does not cure them. Ephraim, how could I part with you? Israel, how could I give you up? How could I treat you like Admah, or deal with you like Zeboiim? My heart recoils from it, my whole being trembles at the thought. I will not give reign to my fierce anger, I will not destroy Ephraim again, for I am God, not man: I am the Holy One in your midst and have no wish to destroy.

They will follow behind the Lord; he will be roaring like a lion – how he will roar! – and his sons will come speeding from the west; they will come speeding from Egypt like a bird, speeding from the land of Assyria like a dove, and I will settle them in their homes – it is the Lord who speaks.

This is the word of the Lord.

**28**

**A reading from the prophet Hosea  
14:2-10**

*Israel, come back to the Lord your God.*

Israel, come back to the Lord your God; your iniquity was the cause of your downfall. Provide yourself with words and come back to the Lord. Say to him, 'Take all iniquity away so that we may have happiness again and offer you our words of praise. Assyria cannot save us, we will not ride horses any more, or say, "Our God!" to what our own hands have made, for you are the one in whom orphans find compassion.' – I will heal their disloyalty, I will love them with all my heart, for my anger has turned from them. I will fall like dew on Israel. He shall bloom like the lily, and thrust out roots like the poplar,

his shoots will spread far; he will have the beauty of the olive and the fragrance of Lebanon. They will come back to live in my shade; they will grow corn that flourishes, they will cultivate vines as renowned as the wine of Helbon. What has Ephraim to do with idols any more when it is I who hear his prayer and care for him? I am like a cypress ever green, all your fruitfulness comes from me.

Let the wise man understand these words. Let the intelligent man grasp their meaning. For the ways of the Lord are straight, and virtuous men walk in them, but sinners stumble.

This is the word of the Lord.

**29**

**A reading from the prophet Joel  
2:12-19**

*Come back to me with all your heart.*

'Now, now – it is the Lord who speaks – come back to me with all your heart, fasting, weeping, mourning.'

Let your hearts be broken, not your garments torn, turn to the Lord your God again, for he is all tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in graciousness, and ready to relent. Who knows if he will not turn again, will not relent, will not leave a blessing as he passes, oblation and libation for the Lord your God? Sound the trumpet in Zion! Order a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly, call the people together, summon the community, assemble the elders, gather the children, even the infants at the breast. Let the bridegroom leave his bedroom and the bride her alcove. Between vestibule and altar let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, lament. Let them say, 'Spare your people, Lord! Do not make your heritage a thing of shame, a byword for the nations. Why should it be said among the nations, "Where is their God?"'

Then the Lord, jealous on behalf of his land, took pity on his people.

The Lord spoke in answer to his people,

'Now I send you  
corn and wine and oil,  
until you have enough.  
Never again shall I make you  
a thing of shame for the nations.'

This is the word of the Lord.

30

### **A reading from the prophet Micah**

**6:1-15**

*Act justly, love tenderly, and walk humbly with  
your God.*

Listen to what the Lord is saying:  
Stand up and let the case begin in the hearing of  
the mountains  
and let the hills hear what you say.  
Listen, you mountains, to the Lord's accusation,  
give ear, you foundations of the earth,  
for the Lord is accusing his people,  
pleading against Israel:

My people, what have I done to you,  
how have I been a burden to you? Answer me.  
I brought you out of the land of Egypt,  
I rescued you from the house of slavery;  
I sent Moses to lead you,  
with Aaron and Miriam.  
My people, remember:  
what did Balak plot, that king of Moab?  
What did Balaam answer, that son of Beor  
from Shittim to Gilgal,  
for you to know the rightness of the ways of the  
Lord?

– 'With what gift shall I come into the Lord's  
presence  
and bow down before God on high?  
Shall I come with holocausts,  
with calves one year old?  
Will he be pleased with rams by the thousand,  
with libations of oil in torrents?  
Must I give my first-born for what I have done  
wrong,  
the fruit of my body for my own sin?'  
- What is good has been explained to you, man;  
this is what the Lord asks of you:  
only this, to act justly,  
to love tenderly  
and to walk humbly with your God.

The voice of the Lord. He is calling to the city:

Listen, tribe, and assembly of the city  
whose rich men are crammed with violence,  
whose citizens are liars.

Must I put up with fraudulent measure,  
or that abomination the short-weight bushel?  
Must I hold the man honest who measures with  
false scales  
and a bag of faked weights?  
I have therefore begun to strike you down,  
to bring you to ruin for your sins.  
You will sow but never reap,  
press the olive but never rub yourself with oil,  
press the grape but never drink wine from it;  
you will eat but never be satisfied,  
store away but never preserve -  
and what is preserved I shall give to the sword.

This is the word of the Lord.

31

### **A reading from the prophet Micah**

**7:2-7.18-20**

*Once more have pity on us, tread down our  
faults, to the bottom of the sea throw all our  
sins.*

The Lord says this:

The devout have vanished from the land:  
there is not one honest man left.  
All are lurking for blood,  
every man hunting down his brother.  
Their hands are skilled in evil:  
the official demands,  
the judge gives judgement for a bribe,  
the man in power pronounces as he pleases.  
Put no trust in a neighbour,  
have no confidence in a friend;  
to the woman who shares your bed  
do not open your mouth.  
For son insults father,  
daughter defies mother,  
daughter-in-law defies mother-in-law;  
a man's enemies are those of his own  
household.  
Among them, the best is like a briar,  
the most honest a hedge of thorn.  
Today will come their ordeal from the North,  
now is the time for their confusion.

For my part, I look to the Lord,  
my hope is in the God who will save me;  
my God will hear me.

What god can compare with you; taking fault  
away,  
pardoning crime,  
not cherishing anger for ever  
but delighting in showing mercy?

Once more have pity on us,  
tread down our faults,



to the bottom of the sea  
throw all our sins.  
Grant Jacob your faithfulness,  
and Abraham your mercy,  
as you swore to our fathers  
from the days of long ago.

This is the word of the Lord.

## 32

### **A reading from the prophet Zechariah**

#### **1:1-6**

*Return to me, and I will return to you.*

In the second year of Darius, in the eighth month, the word of the Lord was addressed to the prophet Zechariah (son of Berechiah), son of Iddo, as follows, 'Cry out to the remnant of this people and say to them, "The Lord of Hosts says this: Return to me, and I will return to you, says the Lord of Hosts. Do not be like your ancestors, to whom the prophet in the past cried: the Lord of Hosts says this: Turn back from your evil ways and evil deeds. But – it is the Lord who speaks – they would not listen or pay attention to me. Where are your ancestors now? Are those prophets still alive? Did not my words and my orders, with which I charged my servants the prophets, overtake your ancestors? The Lord was stirred to anger against your ancestors".' This reduced them to such confusion that they said, 'The Lord of Hosts has treated us as he resolved to do, and as our ways and deeds deserved.'

This is the word of the Lord.

# RESPONSORIAL PSALM

1

## Ps 12. R v.6

**R** O Lord, I trust in your merciful love.

1. How long, O Lord, will you forget me?  
How long will you hide your face?  
How long must I bear grief in my soul,  
this sorrow in my heart day and night?  
How long shall my enemy prevail? **R**
2. Look at me, answer me, Lord my God!  
Give light to my eyes lest I fall asleep in death,  
lest my enemy says: 'I have overcome him';  
lest my enemies rejoice to see my fall. **R**
3. As for me, I trust in your merciful love.  
Let my heart rejoice in your saving help:  
Let me sing to the Lord for his goodness to me,  
singing psalms to the name of the Lord, the  
Most High. **R**

**R** O Lord, I trust in your merciful love.

2

## Ps 24. R v.16

**R** Turn to me, Lord, and have mercy.

1. To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.  
I trust you, let me not be disappointed;  
do not let my enemies triumph.  
Those who hope in you shall not be  
disappointed,  
but only those who wantonly break faith. **R**
2. Lord, make me know your ways.  
Lord, teach me your paths.  
Make me walk in your truth, and teach me;  
for you are God my saviour. **R**
3. In you I hope all the day long  
because of your goodness, O Lord.  
Remember your mercy, Lord,  
and the love you have shown from of old.  
Do not remember the sins of my youth.  
In your love remember me. **R**
4. The Lord is good and upright.  
He shows the path to those who stray,  
He guides the humble in the right path;  
he teaches his way to the poor. **R**
5. His ways are faithfulness and love  
for those who keep his covenant and will.  
Lord, for the sake of your name  
forgive my guilt; for it is great. **R**

6. If anyone fears the Lord  
he will show him the path he should choose.  
His soul shall live in happiness  
and his children shall possess the land.  
The Lord's friendship is for those who revere  
him -  
to them he reveals his covenant. **R**
7. My eyes are always on the Lord;  
for he rescues my feet from the snare.  
Turn to me and have mercy  
for I am lonely and poor. **R**
8. Relieve the anguish of my heart  
and set me free from my distress.  
See my affliction and my toil  
and take all my sins away. **R**
9. See how many are my foes;  
how violent their hatred for me.  
Preserve my life and rescue me.  
Do not disappoint me, you are my refuge. **R**
10. May innocence and uprightness protect me:  
for my hope is in you, O Lord.  
Redeem Israel, O God, from all its distress. **R**

3

## Ps 30:1-6. R v.6

**R** It is you who will redeem me, Lord.

1. In you, O Lord, I take refuge.  
Let me never be put to shame.  
In your justice, set me free,  
hear me and speedily rescue me. **R**
2. Be a rock of refuge for me,  
a mighty stronghold to save me  
for you are my rock, my stronghold.  
For your name's sake, lead me and guide  
me. **R**
3. Release me from the snares they have hidden  
for you are my refuge, Lord.  
Into your hands I commend my spirit.  
It is you who will redeem me, Lord, O God of  
truth. **R**

4

## Ps 31. R v.5

**R** Lord, forgive the wrong I have done.

1. Happy the man whose offence is forgiven,  
whose sin is remitted.

- O happy the man to whom the Lord  
imputes no guilt,  
in whose spirit is no guile. **R**
2. I kept it secret and my frame was wasted.  
I groaned all the day long  
for night and day your hand  
was heavy upon me.  
Indeed, my strength was dried up  
as by the summer's heat. **R**
3. But now I have acknowledged my sins;  
my guilt I did not hide.  
I said: 'I will confess  
my offence to the Lord.'  
And you, Lord, have forgiven  
the guilt of my sin. **R**
4. So let every good man pray to you  
in the time of need.  
The floods of water may reach high  
but him they shall not reach. **R**
5. You are my hiding place, O Lord;  
you save me from distress.  
You surround me with cries of deliverance. **R**
6. I will instruct you and teach you  
the way you should go;  
I will give you counsel  
with my eye upon you. **R**
7. Be not like horse and mule, unintelligent,  
needing bridle and bit,  
else they will not approach you.  
Many sorrows has the wicked  
but he who trusts in the Lord,  
loving mercy surrounds him. **R**
8. Rejoice, rejoice in the Lord,  
exult, you just!  
o come, ring out your joy,  
all you upright of heart. **R**

**5**

**Ps 35. R v.8**

**R** How precious is your love, O Lord.

1. Sin speaks to the sinner  
in the depths of his heart.  
There is no fear of God  
before his eyes. **R**
2. He so flatters himself in his mind  
that he knows not his guilt.  
In his mouth are mischief and deceit.  
All wisdom is gone. **R**

3. He plots the defeat of goodness  
as he lies on his bed.  
He has set his foot on evil ways,  
he clings to what is evil. **R**
4. Your love, Lord, reaches to heaven;  
your truth to the skies.  
Your justice is like God's mountain  
your judgements like the deep. **R**
5. To both man and beast you give protection.  
O Lord, how precious is your love.  
My God, the sons of men  
find refuge in the shelter of your wings. **R**
6. They feast on the riches of your house;  
they drink from the stream of your delight.  
In you is the source of life  
and in your light we see light. **R**
7. Keep on loving those who know you,  
doing justice for upright hearts.  
Let the foot of the proud not crush me  
nor the hand of the wicked cast me out. **R**
8. See how the evil-doers have fallen!  
Flung down, they shall never arise.  
**R** How precious is your love, O Lord.

**6**

**Ps 49: 7-8. 14-23. R v.23**

**R** I will show God's salvation to the upright.

1. Listen, my people, I will speak;  
Israel, I will testify against you,  
for I am God, your God.  
I accuse you, lay the charge before you. **R**
2. I find no fault with your sacrifices,  
your offerings are always before me.  
Pay your sacrifice of thanksgiving to God  
and render him your votive offerings.  
Call on me in the day of distress.  
I will free you and you shall honour me. **R**
3. But how can you recite my commandments  
and take my covenant on your lips,  
you who despise my law  
and throw my words to the winds? **R**
4. You see a thief and go with him,  
you throw in your lot with adulterers,  
you unbridle your mouth for evil  
and your tongue is plotting crime. **R**
5. You sit and malign your brother  
and slander your own mother's son.

You do this, and should I keep silence?  
Do you think that I am like you? **R**

6. Mark this, you who never think of God,  
lest I seize you and you cannot escape;  
a sacrifice of thanksgiving honours me  
and I will show God's salvation to the  
upright. **R**

**7**

**Ps 50. Bl v.14**

**R** Give me again the joy of your help.

1. Have mercy on me, God, in your kindness.  
In your compassion blot out my offence.  
O wash me more and more from my guilt  
and cleanse me from my sin. **R**
2. My offences truly I know them;  
my sin is always before me.  
Against you, you alone, have I sinned ·  
what is evil in your sight I have done.' **R**
3. That you. may be justified when you give  
sentence  
and be without reproach when you judge  
O see, in guilt I was born, '  
a sinner was I conceived. **R**
4. Indeed you love truth in the heart;  
then in the secret of my heart teach me wisdom  
O purify me, then I shall be clean;  
O wash me, I shall be whiter than snow. **R**
5. Make me hear rejoicing and gladness,  
that the bones you have crushed may thrill.  
From my sins turn away your face  
and blot out all my guilt. **R**
6. A pure heart create for me, O God,  
put a steadfast spirit within me,  
Do not cast me away from your presence  
nor deprive me of your holy spirit. **R**
7. Give me again the joy of your help;  
with a spirit of fervour sustain me  
that I may teach transgressors your ways  
and sinners may return to you. **R**
8. O rescue me, God, my helper,  
and my tongue shall ring out your goodness.  
O Lord, open my lips  
and my mouth shall declare your praise. **R**
9. For in sacrifice you take no delight,  
burnt offering from me you would refuse,  
my sacrifice, a contrite spirit.  
A humbled, contrite heart you will not  
spurn. **R**

**R** Give me again the joy of your help.

10. In your goodness, show favour to Sion:  
rebuild the walls of Jerusalem.  
Then you will be pleased with lawful sacrifice,  
(burnt offerings wholly consumed),  
then you will be offered young bulls on your  
altar. **R**

**8**

**Ps 72. R v.28**

**R** I have made the Lord God my refuge.

or

**R** To be near God is my happiness.

1. How good God is to Israel,  
to those who are pure of heart.  
Yet my feet came close to stumbling,  
my steps had almost slipped  
for I was filled with envy of the proud  
when I saw how the wicked prosper. **R**
2. For them there are no pains;  
their bodies are sound and sleek.  
They have no share in men's sorrows;  
they are not stricken like others. **R**
3. So they wear their pride like a necklace,  
they clothe themselves with violence.  
Their hearts overflow with malice,  
their minds seethe with plots. **R**
4. They scoff; they speak with malice;  
from on high they plan oppression.  
They have set their mouths in the heavens  
and their tongues dictate to the earth. **R**
5. So the people turn to follow them  
and drink in all their words.  
They say: 'How can God know?  
Does the Most High take any notice?'  
Look at them, such are the wicked,  
but untroubled, they grow in wealth. **R**
6. How useless to keep my heart pure  
and wash my hands in innocence,  
when I was stricken all day long,  
suffered punishment day after day.  
Then I said: 'If! should speak like that,  
I should betray the race of your sons.' **R**
7. I strove to fathom this problem,  
too hard for my mind to understand,  
until I pierced the mysteries of God  
and understood what becomes of the  
wicked. **R**

How slippery the paths on which you set them;  
you make them slide to destruction.  
How suddenly they come to their ruin,  
wiped out, destroyed by terrors.  
Like a dream one wakes from, O Lord,  
when you wake you dismiss them as  
phantoms. **R**

8. And so when my heart grew embittered  
and when I was cut to the quick,  
I was stupid and did not understand,  
no better than a beast in your sight. **R**
9. Yet I was always in your presence;  
you were holding me by my right hand.  
You will guide me by your counsel  
and so you will lead me to glory. **R**
10. What else have I in heaven but you?  
Apart from you I want nothing on earth.  
My body and my heart faint for joy;  
God is my possession for ever. **R**
11. All those who abandon you shall perish;  
you will destroy all those who are faithless.  
To be near God is my happiness.  
I have made the Lord God my refuge.  
I will tell of all your works  
at the gates of the city of Sion. **R**

**9**

**Ps 89. R v.14**

**R** Fill us with your love, O Lord,  
and we shall rejoice.

1. O Lord, you have been our refuge  
from one generation to the next.  
Before the mountains were born  
or the earth or the world brought forth,  
you are God, without beginning or end. **R**
2. You turn men back into dust  
and say: 'Go back, sons of men.'  
To your eyes a thousand years  
are like yesterday, come and gone,  
no more than a watch in the night. **R**
3. You sweep men away like a dream,  
like grass which springs up in the morning.  
In the morning it springs up and flowers:  
by evening it withers and fades. **R**
4. So we are destroyed in your anger  
struck with terror in your fury.  
Our guilt lies open before you;  
our secrets in the light of your face. **R**
5. All our days pass away in your anger.  
Our life is over like a sigh.

Our span is seventy years  
or eighty for those who are strong. **R**

6. And most of these are emptiness and pain.  
They pass swiftly and we are gone.  
Who understands the power of your anger  
and fears the strength of your fury? **R**
7. Make us know the shortness of our life  
that we may gain wisdom of heart.  
Lord, relent! Is your anger for ever?  
Show pity to your servants. **R**
8. In the morning, fill us with your love;  
we shall exult and rejoice all our days.  
Give us joy to balance our affliction  
for the years when we knew misfortune. **R**
9. Show forth your work to your servants;  
let your glory shine on their children.  
Let the favour of the Lord be upon us:  
give success to the work of our hands. **R**

**10**

**Ps 94. R v.8**

**R** that today you would listen to his voice:  
Harden not your hearts.

1. Come, ring out our joy to the Lord;  
hail the rock who saves us.  
Let us come before him, giving thanks,  
with songs let us hail the Lord. **R**
2. A mighty God is the Lord,  
a great king above all gods.  
In his hand are the depths of the earth;  
the heights of the mountains are his.  
To him belongs the sea, for he made it  
and the dry land shaped by his hands. **R**
3. Come in; let us bow and bend low;  
let us kneel before the God who made us  
for he is our God and we  
the people who belong to his pasture,  
the flock that is led by his hand. **R**
4. O that today you would listen to his voice!  
'Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,  
as on that day at Massah in the desert  
when your fathers put me to the test;  
when they tried me, though they saw my  
work. **R**
5. 'For forty years I was wearied of these people  
and I said: "Their hearts are astray,  
these people do not know my ways."  
Then I took an oath in my anger:  
"Never shall they enter my rest."' **R**

**11**

**Ps 118:1. 10-13. 15-16. R v.1**

**R** They are happy who follow God’s law.

1. They are happy whose life is blameless, who follow God’s law. **R**
2. I have sought you with all my heart: let me not stray from your commands. I treasure your promise in my heart lest I sin against you. **R**
3. Blessed are you, O Lord; teach me your statutes. With my tongue I have recounted the decree of your lips. **R**
4. I will ponder all your precepts and consider your paths. I take delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word. **R**

**12**

**Ps 122. R v.2**

**R** Our eyes are fixed on the Lord.

1. To you have I lifted up my eyes, you who dwell in the heavens: my eyes, like the eyes of slaves on the hand of their lords. **R**
2. Like the eyes of a servant on the hand of her mistress, so our eyes are on the Lord our God till he show us his mercy. **R**
3. Have mercy on us, Lord, have mercy. We are filled with contempt. Indeed all too full is our soul with the scorn of the rich, (with the proud man’s disdain). **R**

**13**

**Ps 129. R v.7**

**R** With the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption.

1. Out of the depths I cry to you, O Lord, Lord, hear my voice! O let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleading. **R**
2. If you, O Lord, should mark our guilt, Lord, who would survive?

But with you is found forgiveness: for this we revere you. **R**

3. My soul is waiting for the Lord, I count on his word. My soul is longing for the Lord more than watchman for daybreak. **R**
4. Because with the Lord there is mercy and fullness of redemption, Israel indeed he will redeem from all its iniquity. **R**

**14**

**Ps 138:1-18. 23-24. R v.1. Alt. R v.23**

**R** O Lord, you search me and you know me.

or

**R** O search me, God, and know my heart.

1. O Lord, you search me and you know me, you know my resting and my rising, you discern my purpose from afar. You mark when I walk or lie down, all my ways lie open to you. **R**
2. Before ever a word is on my tongue you know it, O Lord, through and through. Behind and before you besiege me, your hand ever laid upon me. Too wonderful for me, this knowledge, too high, beyond my reach. **R**
3. O where can I go from your spirit, or where can I flee from your face? If I climb the heavens, you are there. If I lie in the grave, you are there. **R**
4. If I take the wings of the dawn and dwell at the sea’s furthest end, even there your hand would lead me, your right hand would hold me fast. **R**
5. If I say: ‘Let the darkness hide me and the light around me be night,’ even darkness is not dark for you and the night is as clear as the day. **R**
6. For it was you who created my being, knit me together in my mother’s womb. I thank you for the wonder of my being, for the wonders of all your creation. **R**
7. Already you knew my soul, my body held no secret from you when I was being fashioned in secret and moulded in the depths of the earth. **R**

For your name's sake, Lord, save my life;  
in your justice save my soul from distress. **R**

8. Your eyes saw all my actions,  
they were all of them written in your book;  
everyone of my days was decreed  
before one of them came into being. **R**
9. To me, how mysterious your thoughts,  
the sum of them not to be numbered!  
If! count them, they are more than the sand;  
to finish, I must be eternal, like you. **R**
10. O search me, God, and know my heart.  
o test me and know my thoughts.  
See that I follow not the wrong path  
and lead me in the path of life eternal. **R**

## 15

Ps 142:1-11. R v.10

**R** Teach me to do your will, my God.

1. Lord, listen to my prayer:  
turn your ear to my appeal.  
You are faithful, you are just; give answer.  
Do not call your servant to judgement  
for no one is just in your sight. **R**
2. The enemy pursues my soul;  
he has crushed my life to the ground;  
he has made me dwell in darkness  
like the dead, long forgotten.  
Therefore my spirit fails;  
my heart is numb within me. **R**
3. I remember the days that are past:  
I ponder all your works.  
I muse on what your hand has wrought  
and to you I stretch out my hands.  
Like a parched land my soul thirsts for you. **R**
4. Lord, make haste and give me answer;  
for my spirit fails within me.  
Do not hide your face  
lest I become like those in the grave. **R**
5. In the morning let me know your love  
for I put my trust in you.  
Make me know the way I should walk:  
to you I lift up my soul.

**R** Teach me to do your will, my God.

6. Rescue me, Lord, from my enemies;  
I have fled to you for refuge.  
Teach me to do your will  
for you, O Lord, are my God. **R**
7. Let your good spirit guide me  
in ways that are level and smooth.

# NEW TESTAMENT READING

1

**A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans  
3:22-26**

*Jew and pagan alike are justified through the free gift of God's grace by being redeemed in Christ Jesus.*

The justice of God comes through faith to everyone, Jew and pagan alike who believes in Jesus Christ. Both Jew and pagan sinned and forfeited God's glory, and both are justified through the free gift of his grace by being redeemed in Christ Jesus who was appointed by God to sacrifice his life so as to win reconciliation through faith. In this way God makes his justice known; first, for the past, when sins went unpunished because he held his hand, then for the present age, by showing positively that he is just, and that he justifies everyone who believes in Jesus.

This is the word of the Lord.

2

**A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans  
5:6-11**

*We are filled with joyful trust in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have already gained our reconciliation.*

We were still helpless when at his appointed moment Christ died for sinful men. It is not easy to die even for a good man – though of course for someone really worthy, a man might be prepared to die – but what proves that God loves us is that Christ died for us while we were still sinners. Having died to make us righteous, is it likely that he would now fail to save us from God's anger? When we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, we were still enemies; now that we have been reconciled, surely we may count on being saved by the life of his Son? Not merely because we have been reconciled but because we are filled with joyful trust in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have already gained our reconciliation.

This is the word of the Lord.

3

**A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans 6:2-13**

*You must consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus.*

We are dead to sin, so how can we continue to live in it? You have been taught that when we were baptised in Christ Jesus we were baptised in his death; in other words, when we were baptised we went into the tomb with him and joined him in death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glory, we too might live a new life. If in union with Christ we have imitated his death, we shall also imitate him in his resurrection. We must realise that our former selves have been crucified with him to destroy this sinful body and to free us from the slavery of sin. When a man dies of course he has finished with sin.

But we believe that having died with Christ we shall return to life with him: Christ, as we know, having been raised from the dead will never die again. Death has no power over him any more. When he died, he died, once for all, to sin, so his life now is life with God; and in that way, you too must consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive for God in Christ Jesus.

That is why you must not let sin reign in your mortal bodies or command your obedience to bodily passions, why you must not let any part of your body turn into an unholy weapon fighting on the side of sin; you should, instead, offer yourselves to God, and consider yourselves dead men brought back to life; you should make every part of your body into a weapon fighting on the side of God.

This is the word of the Lord.

4

**A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans 6:16-23**

*The wage paid by sin is death; the present given by God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

You know that if you agree to serve and obey a master you become his slaves. You cannot be slaves of sin that leads to death and at the same time slaves of obedience that leads to righteousness. You were once slaves of sin, but thank God you submitted without reservation to the creed you were taught. You may have been freed from the slavery of sin but only to become 'slaves' of righteousness. If I may use human terms to help your natural weakness: as once you put your bodies at the service of vice and immorality, so now you



must put them at the service of righteousness for your sanctification.

When you were slaves of sin, you felt no obligation to. Righteousness and what did you get from this? Nothing but experiences that now 'make you blush, since that sort of behaviour ends in death. Now, however, you have been set free from sin, you have been made slaves of God, and you get a reward leading to your sanctification and ending in eternal life. For the wage paid by sin is death; the present given by God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is the word of the Lord.

## 5

### **A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans 7:14-25**

*What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

The Law, of course, as we all know, is spiritual; but I am unspiritual; I have been sold as a slave to sin. I cannot understand my own behaviour. I fail to carry out the things I want to do, and I find myself doing the very things I hate. When I act against my own will, that means I have a self that acknowledges that the Law is good, and so the thing behaving in that way is not my self but sin living in me. The fact is, I know of nothing good living in me – living, that is, in my unspiritual self – for though the will to do what is good is in me, the performance is not, with the result that instead of doing the good things I want to do, I carry out the sinful things I do not want. When I act against my will, then, it is not my true self doing it, but sin which lives in me.

In fact, this seems to be the rule, that every single time I want to do good it is something evil that comes to hand. In my inmost self I dearly love God's Law, but I can see that my body follows a different law that battles against the law which my reason dictates. This is what makes me a prisoner of that law of sin which lives inside my body.

What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body doomed to death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! In short, it is I who with my reason serve the Law of God, and no less I who serve in my unspiritual self the law of sin.

This is the word of the Lord.

## 6

### **A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans 12:1-2.9-19**

*Let your behaviour change, modelled by your new mind.*

Think of God's mercy and worship him, I beg you, in a way that is worthy of thinking beings, by offering your living bodies as a holy sacrifice, truly pleasing to God. Do not model yourselves on the behaviour of the world around you, but let your behaviour change, modelled by your new mind. This is the only way to discover the will of God and know what is good, what it is that God wants, what is the perfect thing to do.

Do not let your love be a pretence, but sincerely prefer good to evil. Love each other as much as brothers should, and have a profound respect for each other. Work for the Lord with untiring effort and with great earnestness of spirit. If you have hope, this will make you cheerful. Do not give up if trials come; and keep on praying. If any of the saints are in need you must share with them; and you should make hospitality your special care.

Bless those who persecute you: never curse them, bless them. Rejoice with those who rejoice and be sad with those in sorrow. Treat everyone with equal kindness; never be condescending but make real friends with the poor. Do not allow yourself to become self-satisfied. Never repay evil with evil but let everyone see that you are interested only in the highest ideals. Do all you can to live at peace with everyone. Never try to get revenge; leave that, my friends, to God's anger. As scripture says: vengeance is mine - I will pay them back, the Lord promises.

This is the word of the Lord.

## 7

### **A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Romans 13:8-14**

*Let us give up all the things we prefer to do under cover of the dark; let us arm ourselves and appear in the light.*

Avoid getting into debt, except the debt of mutual love. If you love your fellow men you have carried out your obligations. All the commandments: You shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not covet, and so on, are summed up in this single command: You must love your neighbour as yourself. Love is the one thing that cannot hurt your neighbour; that is why it is the answer to everyone of the commandments.

Besides, you know 'the time' has come: you must wake up now: our salvation is even nearer than it was when we were converted. The night is almost over, it will be daylight soon – let us give up all the things we prefer to do under cover of the dark; let us arm ourselves and appear in the light. Let us live decently as people do in the daytime: no drunken

orgies, no promiscuity or licentiousness, and no wrangling or jealousy. Let your armour be the Lord Jesus Christ; forget about satisfying your bodies with all their cravings.

This is the word of the Lord.

8

**A reading from the second letter of St Paul to the Corinthians  
5:17-21**

*God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself.*

For anyone who is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old creation has gone, and now the new one is here. It is all God's work. It was God who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the work of handing on this reconciliation. In other words, God in Christ was reconciling the world to himself, not holding men's faults against them, and he has entrusted to us the news that they are reconciled. So we are ambassadors for Christ; it is as though God were appealing through us, and the appeal that we make in Christ's name is: be reconciled to God. For our sake God made the sinless one into sin, so that in him we might become the goodness of God.

This is the word of the Lord.

9

**A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Galatians 5:16-24**

*You cannot belong to Christ Jesus unless you crucify all self-indulgent passions and desires.*

If you are guided by the Spirit you will be in no danger of yielding to self-indulgence, since self-indulgence is the opposite of the Spirit, the Spirit is totally against such a thing, and it is precisely because the two are so opposed that you do not always carry out your good intentions. If you are led by the Spirit, no law can touch you. When self-indulgence is at work the results are obvious: fornication, gross indecency and sexual irresponsibility; idolatry and sorcery; feuds and wrangling, jealousy, bad temper and quarrels; disagreements, factions, envy; drunkenness, orgies and similar things. I warn you now, as I warned you before: those who behave like this will not inherit the kingdom of God. What the Spirit brings is very different: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control. There can be no law against things like that, of course. You cannot belong to Christ Jesus unless you crucify all self-indulgent passions and desires.

This is the word of the Lord.

10

**A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians**

**2:1-10**

*God loved us with so much love that, when we were dead through our sins, he brought us life with Christ.*

You were dead, through the crimes and the sins in which you used to live when you were following the way of this world, obeying the ruler who governs the air, the spirit who is at work in the rebellious. We all were among them too in the past, living sensual lives, ruled entirely by our own physical desires and our own ideas; so that by nature we were as much under God's anger as the rest of the world. But God loved us with so much love that he was generous with his mercy: when we were dead through our sins, he brought us to life with Christ – it is through grace that you have been saved – and raised us up with him and gave us a place with him in heaven, in Christ Jesus.

This was to show for all ages to come, through his goodness towards us in Christ Jesus, how infinitely rich he is in grace. Because it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith; not by anything of your own, but by a gift from God; not by anything that you have done, so that nobody can claim the credit. We are God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus to live the good life as from the beginning he had meant us to live it.

This is the word of the Lord.

11

**A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians 4:1-3. 17-32**

*Your mind must be renewed by a spiritual revolution so that you can put on the new self.*

I, the prisoner in the Lord, implore you to lead a life worthy of your vocation. Bear with one another charitably, in complete selflessness, gentleness and patience. Do all you can to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together.

In particular, I want to urge you in the name of the Lord, not to go on living the aimless kind of life that pagans live. Intellectually they are in the dark, and they are estranged from the life of God, without knowledge because they have shut their hearts to it. Their sense of right and wrong once dulled, they have abandoned themselves to sexuality and eagerly pursue a career of indecency of every kind. Now that is hardly the way you have learnt from Christ, unless you failed to hear him properly when you were taught what the truth is in Jesus. You must give up your old way of life; you must put aside your old self, which gets corrupted

by following illusory desires. Your mind must be renewed by a spiritual revolution so that you can put on the new self that has been created in God's way, in the goodness and holiness of the truth.

So from now on, there must be no more lies: You must speak the truth to one another, since we are all parts of one another. Even if you are angry, you must not sin: never let the sun set on your anger or else you will give the devil a foothold. Anyone who was a thief must stop stealing; he should try to find some useful manual work instead, and be able to do some good by helping others that are in need. Guard against foul talk; let your words be for the improvement of others, as occasion offers, and do good to your listeners, otherwise you will only be grieving the Holy Spirit of God who has marked you with his seal for you to be set free when the day comes. Never have grudges against others, or lose your temper, or raise your voice to anybody, or call each other names, or allow any sort of spitefulness. Be friends with one another, and kind, forgiving each other as readily as God forgave you in Christ.

This is the word of the Lord.

## 12

### **A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians 5:1-14**

*You were darkness once, but now you are light in the Lord; be like children of light.*

Try to imitate God, as children of his that he loves, and follow Christ by loving as he loved you, giving himself up in our place as a fragrant offering and a sacrifice to God. Among you there must be not even a mention of fornication or impurity in any of its forms, or promiscuity: this would hardly become the saints! There must be no coarseness, or salacious talk and jokes – all this is wrong for you; raise your voices in thanksgiving instead. For you can be quite certain that nobody who actually indulges in fornication or impurity or promiscuity – which is worshipping a false god – can inherit anything of the kingdom of God. Do not let anyone deceive you with empty arguments: it is for this loose living that God's anger comes down on those who rebel against him. Make sure that you are not included with them. You were darkness once, but now you are light in the Lord; be like children of light, for the effects of the light are seen in complete goodness and right living and truth. Try to discover what the Lord wants of you, having nothing to do with the futile works of darkness but exposing them by contrast. The things which are done in secret are things that people are ashamed even to speak of; but anything exposed by the light will be illuminated and anything illuminated turns into light. That is why it is said:

Wake up from your sleep,  
rise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you.

This is the word of the Lord.

## 13

### **A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Ephesians 6:10-18**

*You must rely on God's armour, or you will not be able to put up any resistance when the worst happens.*

Grow strong in the Lord, with the strength of his power. Put God's armour on so as to be able to resist the devil's tactics. For it is not against human enemies that we have to struggle, but against the Sovereignities and the Powers who originate the darkness in this world, the spiritual army of evil in the heavens. That is why you must rely on God's armour, or you will not be able to put up any resistance when the worst happens, or have enough resources to hold your ground.

So stand your ground, with truth buckled round your waist, and integrity for a breastplate, wearing for shoes on your feet the eagerness to spread the gospel of peace and always carrying the shield of faith so that you can use it to put out the burning arrows of the evil one. And then you must accept salvation from God to be your helmet and receive the word of God from the Spirit to use as a sword.

Pray all the time, asking for what you need, praying in the Spirit on every possible occasion. Never get tired of staying awake to pray for all the saints.

This is the word of the Lord.

## 14

### **A reading from the letter of St Paul to the Colossians 3:1-10. 12-17**

*Since you have been brought back to true life with Christ, you must look for the things that are in heaven. That is why you must kill everything in you that belongs only to earthly life.*

Since you have been brought back to true life with Christ, you must look for the things that are in heaven, where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand. Let your thoughts be on heavenly things, not on the things that are on the earth, because you have died, and now the life you have is hidden with Christ in God. But when Christ is revealed – and he is your life – you too will be revealed in all your glory with him.

That is why you must kill everything in you that belongs only to earthly life: fornication, impurity, guilty passion, evil desires and especially greed, which is the same thing as worshipping a false god; all this is the sort of behaviour that makes God angry. And it is the way in which you used to live when you were surrounded by people doing the same thing, but now you, of all people, must give all these things up: getting angry, being bad-tempered, spitefulness, abusive language and dirty talk; and never tell each other lies. You have stripped off your old behaviour with your old self, and you have put on a new self which will progress towards true knowledge the more it is renewed in the image of its creator.

You are God's chosen race, his saints; he loves you, and you should be clothed in sincere compassion, in kindness and humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with one another; forgive each other as soon as a quarrel begins. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same. Over all these clothes, to keep them together and complete them, put on love. And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts because it is for this that you were called together as parts of one body. Always be thankful.

Let the message of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other, and advise each other, in all wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God; and never say or do anything except in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

This is the word of the Lord.

## 15

### **A reading from the letter to the Hebrews 12:1-5**

*In the fight against sin, you have not yet had to keep fighting to the point of death.*

With so many witnesses in a great cloud on every side of us, we should throw off everything that hinders us, especially the sin that clings so easily, and keep running steadily in the race we have started. Let us not lose sight of Jesus, who leads us in our faith and brings it to perfection: for the sake of the joy which was still in the future, he endured the cross, disregarding the shameful of it, and from now on has taken his place at the right of God's throne. Think of the way he stood such opposition from sinners and then you will not give up for want of courage. In the fight against sin, you have not yet had to keep fighting to the point of death.

Have you forgotten that encouraging text in which you are addressed as sons? My son, when the Lord corrects you, do not treat it lightly; but do not

get discouraged when he reprimands you.

This is the word of the Lord.

## 16

### **A reading from the letter of St James 1:22-27**

*You must do what the word tells you, and not just listen to it.*

You must do what the word tells you, and not just listen to it and deceive yourselves. To listen to the word and not obey is like looking at your own features in a mirror and then, after a quick look, going off and immediately forgetting what you looked like. But the man who looks steadily at the perfect law of freedom and makes that his habit not listening and then forgetting, but actively putting it into practice – will be happy in all that he does.

Nobody must imagine that he is religious while he still goes on deceiving himself and not keeping control over his tongue; anyone who does this has the wrong idea of religion. Pure, unspoilt religion, in the eyes of God our Father is this: coming to the help of orphans and widows when they need it, and keeping oneself uncontaminated by the world.

This is the word of the Lord.

### **A reading from the letter of St James 2:14-26**

*The case of someone who has never done a single good act but claims that he has faith.*

Take the case of someone who has never done a single good act but claims that he has faith. Will that faith save him? If one of the brothers or one of the sisters is in need of clothes and has not enough food to have on, and one of you says to them, 'I wish you well; keep yourself warm and eat plenty,' without giving them these bare necessities of life, then what good is that? Faith is like that: if good works do not go with it, it is quite dead.

This is the way to talk to people of that kind: 'You say you have faith and I have good deeds; I will prove to you that I have faith by showing you my good deeds – now you prove to me that you have faith without any good deeds to show. You believe in the one God – that is creditable enough, but the demons have the same belief, and they tremble with fear. Do realise, you senseless man, that faith without good deeds is useless. You surely know that Abraham our father was justified by his deed, because he offered his son Isaac on the altar? There you see it: faith and deeds were working together; his faith became perfect by what he did. This is what scripture really means when It says: Abraham put his faith in God, and this was

counted as making him justified; and that is why he was called "the friend of God."'

You see now that it is by doing something good, and not only believing, that a man is justified. There is another example of the same kind: Rahab the prostitute, justified by her deeds because she welcomed the messengers and showed them a different way to live. A body dies when it is separated from the spirit, and in the same way faith is dead if it is separated from good deeds.

This is the word of the Lord.

## 18

### A reading from the letter of St James

#### 3:1-12

*The only man who could reach perfection would be someone who never said anything wrong.*

Only a few of you should be teachers, bearing in mind that those of us who teach can expect a stricter judgement.

After all, everyone of us does something wrong, over and over again; the only man who could reach perfection would be someone who never said anything wrong – he would be able to control every part of himself. Once we put a bit into the horse's mouth, to make it do what we want we have the whole animal under our control. Or think of ships; no matter how big they are, even if a gale is driving them, the man at the helm can steer them anywhere he likes by controlling a tiny rudder. So is the tongue only a tiny part of the body, but it can proudly claim that it does great things. Think how small a flame can set fire to a huge forest; the tongue is a flame like that. Among all the parts of the body, the tongue is a whole wicked world in itself; it infects the whole body; catching fire itself from hell, it sets fire to the whole wheel of creation. Wild animals and birds, reptiles and fish can all be tamed by man, and often are; but nobody can tame the tongue – it is a pest that will not keep still, full of deadly poison. We use it to bless the Lord and Father, but we also use it to curse men who are made in God's image: the blessing and the curse come out of the same mouth. My brothers, this must be wrong - does any water supply give a flow of fresh water and salt water out of the same pipe? Can a fig tree give you olives, my brothers, or a vine give figs? No more can sea water give you fresh water.

This is the word of the Lord.

## 19

### A reading from the first letter of St Peter

#### 1:13-23

*The ransom that was paid to free you was not paid in anything corruptible, neither in silver nor gold, but in the precious blood of a lamb Without stain, namely Christ*

Free your minds of encumbrances; control them, and put your trust in nothing but the grace that will be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. Do not behave in the way that you liked to before you learnt the truth; make a habit of obedience: be holy in all you do, since it is the Holy One who has called you, and scripture says: Be holy, for I am holy.

If you are acknowledging as your Father one who has no favourites and judges everyone according to what he has done, you must be scrupulously careful as long as you are living away from your home. Remember, the ransom that was paid to free you from the useless way of life your ancestors handed down was not paid in anything corruptible, neither in silver nor gold, but in the precious blood of a lamb without spot or stain, namely Christ: who, though known since before the world was made, has been revealed only in our time, the end of the ages, for your sake. Through him you now have faith in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory for that very reason – so that you would have faith and hope in God.

You have been obedient to the truth and purified your souls until you can love like brothers, in sincerity; let your love for each other be real and from the heart – your new birth was not from any mortal seed but from the everlasting word of the living and eternal God.

This is the word of the Lord.

## 20

### A reading from the second letter of St Peter

#### 1:3-11

*You have been called and chosen: work all the harder to justify it.*

By his divine power, Jesus Christ has given us all the things that we need for life and for true devotion, bringing us to know God himself, who has called us by his own glory and goodness. In making these gifts, he has given us the guarantee of something very great and wonderful to come: through them you will be able to share the divine nature and to escape corruption in a world that is sunk in vice. But to attain this, you will have to do your utmost yourselves, adding goodness to the faith that you have, understanding to your goodness,

self-control to your understanding, patience to your self-control, true devotion to your patience, kindness towards your fellow men to your devotion, and, to this kindness, love. If you have a generous supply of these, they will not leave you ineffectual or unproductive: they will bring you to a real knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But without them a man is blind or else short-sighted; he has forgotten how his past sins were washed away. Brothers, you have been called and chosen: work all the harder to justify it. If you do all these things there is no danger that you will ever fall away. In this way you will be granted admittance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ.

This is the word of the Lord.

## 21

### **A reading from the first letter of St John 1:5-10; 2:1-2**

*If we acknowledge our sins, then God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and purify us from everything that is wrong.*

This is what we have heard from Jesus Christ, and the message that we are announcing to you: God is light; there is no darkness in him at all. If we say that we are in union with God while we are living in darkness, we are lying because we are not living the truth. But if we live our lives in the light, as he is in the light, we are in union with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we say we have no sin in us, we are deceiving ourselves and refusing to admit the truth; but if we acknowledge our sins, then God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and purify us from everything that is wrong. To say that we have never sinned is to call God a liar and to show that his word is not in us. I am writing this, my children, to stop you sinning; but if anyone should sin, we have our advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, who is just; he is the sacrifice that takes our sins away, and not only ours, but the whole world's.

This is the word of the Lord.

## 22

### **A reading from the first letter of St John 2:3-11**

*Anyone who hates his brother is still in the dark.*

We can be sure that we know God only by keeping his commandments. Anyone who says, 'I know him', and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, refusing to admit the truth. But when anyone does obey what he has said, God's love comes to perfection in him. We can be sure that we are in God only when the one who claims to be living in him is living the same kind of life as Christ lived. My dear people, this is not a new commandment that I am writing to tell you, but an old commandment that you were given from the beginning, the original commandment which was the message brought to you. Yet in another way, what I am writing to you, and what is being carried out in your lives as it was in his, is a new commandment; because the night is over and the real light is already shining. Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the dark. But anyone who loves his brother is living in the light and need not be afraid of stumbling; unlike the man who hates his brother and is in the darkness, not knowing where he is going, because it is too dark to see.

This is the word of the Lord.

## 23

### **A reading from the first letter of St John 3: 1-24**

*We have passed out of death and into life, and of this we can be sure because we love our brothers.*

Think of the love that the Father has lavished on us, by letting us be called God's children; and that is what we are. Because the world refused to acknowledge him, therefore it does not acknowledge us. My dear people, we are already the children of God but what we are to be in the future has not yet

been revealed,  
all we know is, that when it is revealed  
we shall be like him  
because we shall see him as he really is.

Surely everyone who entertains this hope  
must purify himself, must try to be as pure as  
Christ.

Anyone who sins at all  
breaks the law,  
because to sin is to break the law.  
Now you know that he appeared in order to abolish  
sin,  
and that in him there is no sin;  
anyone who lives in God does not sin,  
and anyone who sins  
has never seen him or known him.  
My children, do not let anyone lead you astray;  
to live a holy life  
is to be holy just as he is holy;  
to lead a sinful life is to belong to the devil,  
since the devil was a sinner from the beginning.  
It was to undo all that the devil has done  
that the Son of God appeared.  
No one who has been begotten by God sins;  
because God's seed remains inside him,  
he cannot sin when he has been begotten by God.

In this way we distinguish the children of God  
from the children of the devil:  
anybody not living a holy life  
and not loving his brother  
is no child of God's.  
This is the message  
as you heard it from the beginning:  
that we are to love one another;  
not to be like Cain, who belonged to the Evil One  
and cut his brother's throat;  
cut his brother's throat simply for this reason,  
that his own life was evil and his brother lived a  
good life.  
You must not be surprised, brothers, when the  
world hates you;  
we have passed out of death and into life,  
and of this we can be sure  
because we love our brothers.  
If you refuse to love, you must remain dead;  
to hate your brother is to be a murderer,  
and murderers, as you know, do not have eternal  
life in them.  
This has taught us love –  
that he gave up his life for us;  
and we, too, ought to give up our lives for our  
brothers.  
If a man who was rich enough in this world's goods  
saw that one of his brothers was in need,  
but closed his heart to him,  
how could the love of God be living in him?  
My children,  
our love is not to be just words or mere talk,

but something real and active;  
only by this can we be certain  
that we are children of the truth  
and be able to quieten our conscience in his  
presence,  
whatever accusations it may raise against us,  
because God is greater than our conscience and he  
knows everything.  
My dear people,  
if we cannot be condemned by our own conscience,  
we need not be afraid in God's presence,  
and whatever we ask him,  
we shall receive,  
because we keep his commandments  
and live the kind of life that he wants.  
His commandments are these:  
that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ  
and that we love one another  
as he told us to.  
Whoever keeps his commandments  
lives in God and God lives in him.  
We know that he lives in us  
by the Spirit that he has given us.

This is the word of the Lord.

**24**

**A reading from the first letter of St John  
4:16-21**

*God is love; and anyone who lives in love in  
God, and God lives in him.*

We ourselves have known and put our faith in  
God's love towards ourselves.  
God is love  
and anyone who lives in love lives in God,  
and God lives in him.  
Love will come to its perfection in us.  
when we can face the day of Judgement without  
fear,  
because even in this world  
we have become as he is.  
In love there can be no fear,  
but fear is driven out by perfect love:  
because to fear is to expect punishment, .  
and anyone who is afraid is still imperfect in love.  
We are to love, then,  
because he loved us first.  
Anyone who says, 'I love God'  
and hates his brother,  
is a liar,  
since a man who does not love the brother that he  
can see  
cannot love God, whom he has never seen.  
So this is the commandment that he has given us,  
that anyone who loves God must also love his  
brother.

This is the word of the Lord.

**A reading from the book of the Apocalypse  
2:1-5**

*Repent, and do as you used to at first.*

I John, heard a voice saying:

'Write to the angel of the church in Ephesus and say, "Here is the message of the one who holds the seven stars in his right hand and who lives surrounded by the seven golden lamp-stands: I know all about you: how hard you work and how much you put up with. I know you cannot stand wicked men, and how you tested the impostors who called themselves apostles and proved they were liars. I know, too, that you have patience and have suffered for my name without growing tired. Nevertheless, I have this complaint to make; you have less love now than you used to. Think where you were before you fell; repent, and do as you used to at first, or else, if you will not repent, I shall come to you and take your lamp-stand from its place".'

This is the word of the Lord.

**A reading from the book of the Apocalypse  
3:14-22**

*Since you are neither cold nor hot, but only lukewarm, I will spit you out of my mouth.*

I, John, heard a voice saying:

'Write to the angel of the church in Laodicea and say, "Here is the message of the Amen, the faithful, the true witness, the ultimate source of God's creation: I know all about you: how you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were one or the other, but since you are neither, but only lukewarm, I will spit you out of my mouth. You say to yourself, 'I am rich, I have made a fortune, and have everything I want', never realising that you are wretchedly and pitifully poor, and blind and naked too. I warn you, buy from me the gold that has been tested in the fire to make you really rich, and white robes to clothe you and cover your shameful nakedness, and eye ointment to put on your eyes so that you are able to see. I am the one who reproves and disciplines all those he loves: so repent in real earnest. Look, I am standing at the door, knocking.

'If one of you hears me calling and opens the door, I will come in to share his meal, side by side with him. Those who prove victorious I will allow to share my throne, just as I was victorious myself and took my place with my Father on his throne. If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches".'

This is the word of the Lord.

**A reading from the book of the Apocalypse  
20: 11-15**

*Every one was judged according to the way in which he had lived.*

I, John, saw a great white throne and the One who was sitting on it. In his presence, earth and sky vanished, leaving no trace. I saw the dead, both great and small, standing in front of his throne, while the book of life was opened, and other books opened which were the record of what they had done in their lives, by which the dead were judged. The sea gave up all the dead who were in it; Death and Hades were emptied of the dead that were in them; and everyone was judged according to the way in which he had lived. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the burning lake. This burning lake is the second death; and anybody whose name could not be found written in the book of life was thrown into the burning lake.

This is the word of the Lord.

**A reading from the book of the Apocalypse  
21:1-8**

*It is the rightful inheritance of the one who proves victorious; and I will be his God and he a son to me.*

I, John, saw a new heaven and a new earth; the first heaven and the first earth had disappeared now, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the holy city, and the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, as beautiful as a bride all dressed for her husband. Then I heard a loud voice call from the throne, 'You see this city? Here God lives among men. He will make his home among them; they shall be his people, and he will be their God; his name is God-with-them. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes; there will be no more death and no more mourning or sadness. The world of the past has gone.'

Then the One sitting on the throne spoke: 'Now I am making the whole of creation new' he said. 'Write this: that what I am saying is sure and will come true.' And then he said, 'It is already done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give water from the well of life free to anybody who is thirsty; it is the rightful inheritance of the one who proves victorious; and I will be his God and he a son to me. But the legacy for cowards, for those who break their word, or worship obscenities, for murderers and fornicators, and for fortune-tellers, idolaters or any other sort of liars, is the second death in the burning lake of sulphur.'

This is the word of the Lord.



# GOSPEL

## 1

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew 3:1-12**

*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.*

John the Baptist appeared; he preached in the wilderness of Judaea and this was his message: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand. This was the man the prophet Isaiah spoke of when he said:

A voice cries in the wilderness:  
Prepare a way for the Lord,  
make his paths straight.

This man John wore a garment made of camel-hair with a leather belt round his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem and all Judaea and the whole Jordan district made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins. But when he saw a number of Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism he said to them, 'Brood of vipers, who warned you to fly from the retribution that is coming? But if you are repentant, produce the appropriate fruit, and do not presume to tell yourselves, "We have Abraham for our father", because, I tell you, God can raise children for Abraham from these stones. Even now the axe is laid to the roots of the trees, so that any tree which fails to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown on the fire. I baptise you in water for repentance, but the one who follows me is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to carry his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fan is in his hand; he will clear his threshing-floor and gather his wheat into the barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

## 2

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew 4:12-17**

*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.*

Hearing that John had been arrested Jesus went back to Galilee, and leaving Nazareth he went and settled in Capernaum, a lakeside town on the borders of Zebulun and Naphtali. In this way the prophecy of Isaiah was to be fulfilled:

Land of Zebulun! Land of Naphtali!  
Way of the sea on the far side of Jordan,  
Galilee of the nations!  
The people that lived in darkness  
has seen a great light;  
on those who dwell in the land and shadow of death  
a light has dawned.

From that moment Jesus began his preaching with the message, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

## 3

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew 5:1-12**

*Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up the hill and taught his disciples.*

Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up the hill. There he sat down and was joined by his disciples. Then he began to speak. This is what he taught them:

'How happy are the poor in spirit;  
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
Happy the gentle:  
they shall have the earth for their heritage.  
Happy those who mourn:  
they shall be comforted.  
Happy those who hunger and thirst for what is right:  
they shall be satisfied.  
Happy the merciful:  
they shall have mercy shown them.  
Happy the pure in heart:  
they shall see God.  
Happy the peacemakers:  
they shall be called sons of God.  
Happy those who are persecuted in the cause of right:  
theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

'Happy are you when people abuse you and persecute you and speak all kinds of calumny against you on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven; this is how they persecuted the prophets before you.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

4

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew 5:13-16**

*Your light must shine in the sight of men.*

Jesus said to his disciples: 'You are the salt of the earth. But if salt becomes tasteless, what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing, and can only be thrown out to be trampled underfoot by men. 'You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill-top cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp to put it under a tub; they put it on the lamp-stand where it shines for everyone in the house. In the same way your light must shine in the sight of men, so that, seeing your good works, they may give the praise to your Father in heaven.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

5

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew 5:17-47**

*But I say this to you.*

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them. I tell you solemnly, till heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, not one little stroke, shall disappear from the Law until its purpose is achieved. Therefore, the man who infringes even one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered the least in the kingdom of heaven; but the man who keeps them and teaches them will be considered great in the kingdom of heaven.

'For I tell you, if your virtue goes no deeper than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.

'You have learnt how it was said to our ancestors: You must not kill; and if anyone does kill he must answer for it before the court. But I say this to you: anyone who is angry with his brother will answer for it before the court; if a man calls his brother "Fool" he will answer for it before the Sanhedrin; and if a man calls him "Renegade" he will answer for it in hell fire. So then, if you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering. Come to terms with your opponent in good time while you are still on the way to the court with him, or he may hand you over to the judge and the judge to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison. I tell you solemnly, you will not get out till you have paid the last penny.

'You have learnt how it was said: You must not commit adultery. But I say this to you: if a man looks at a woman lustfully, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye should cause you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; for it will do you less harm to lose one part of you than to have your whole body thrown into hell. And if your right hand should cause you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; for it will do you less harm to lose one part of you than to have your whole body go to hell.

'It has also been said: Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a writ of dismissal. But I say this to you: everyone who divorces his wife, except for the case of fornication, makes her an adulteress; and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

'Again, you have learnt how it was said to our ancestors: You must not break your oath, but must fulfil your oaths to the Lord. But I say this to you: do not swear at all, either by heaven, since that is God's throne; or by the earth, since that is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, since that is the city of the great king. Do not swear by your own head either, since you cannot turn a single hair white or black. All you need say is "Yes" if you mean yes, "No" if you mean no; anything more than this comes from the evil one.

'You have learnt how it was said: Eye for eye and tooth for tooth. But I say this to you: offer the wicked man no resistance. On the contrary, if anyone hits you on the right cheek, offer him the other as well; if a man takes you to law and would have your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone orders you to go one mile, go two miles with him. Give to anyone who asks, and if anyone wants to borrow, do not turn away.

'You have learnt how it was said: You must love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say this to you: love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you; in this way you will be sons of your Father in heaven, for he causes his sun to rise on bad men as well as good, and his rain to fall on honest and dishonest men alike. For if you love those who love you, what right have you to claim any credit? Even the tax collectors do as much, do they not? And if you save your greetings for your brothers, are you doing anything exceptional? Even the pagans do as much, do they not?'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

6

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew 9:1-8**

*Courage, my child, your sins are forgiven.*

Jesus got in a boat, crossed the water and came to his own town. Then some people appeared, bringing him a paralytic stretched out on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, 'Courage, my child, your Sins are forgiven.' And at this some scribes said to themselves 'This man is blaspheming.' Knowing what was in their minds Jesus said, 'Why do you have such wicked thoughts in your hearts? Now, which of these is easier: to say, "Your sins are forgiven" or to say "Get up and walk"? But to prove to you that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins,' – he said to the paralytic – 'get up, and pick up your bed and go off home.' And the man got up and went home. A feeling of awe came over the crowd when they saw this and they praised God for giving such power to men.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

7

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew 9:9-13**

*I did not come to call the virtuous, but sinners.*

As Jesus was walking he saw a man named Matthew sitting by the customs house, and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he got up and followed him.

While he was at dinner in the house it happened that a number that a number of tax collectors and sinners came to sit at the table with Jesus and his disciples, 'Why does your master eat with tax collectors and sinners?' When he heard this he replied 'It's not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick. Go and learn the meaning of the words: What I want is mercy, not sacrifice. And indeed I did not come to call the virtuous, but sinners.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

8

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew 18:15-20**

*You have won back your brother.*

Jesus said to his disciples: 'If your brother does something wrong, go and have it out with him alone, between your two selves. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother. If he does not listen, take one or two others along with you: the evidence of two or three witnesses is required to sustain any charge. But if he refuses to listen to

these, report it to the community; and if he refuses to listen to the community, treat him like a pagan or a tax collector.

'I tell you solemnly, whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven.

'I tell you solemnly once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

9

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew 18:21-35**

*This is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart.*

Peter went up to Jesus and said, 'Lord, how often must I forgive my brother if he wrongs me? As often as seven times?' Jesus answered, 'Not seven, I tell you, but seventy-seven times.

'And so the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who decided to settle his accounts with his servants. When the reckoning began, they brought him a man who owed ten thousand talents; but he had no means of paying, so his master gave orders that he should be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, to meet the debt. At this, the servant threw himself down at his master's feet. "Give me time" he said "and I will pay the whole sum." And the servant's master felt so sorry for him that he let him go and cancelled the debt. Now as this servant went out, he happened to meet a fellow servant who owed him one hundred denarii; and he seized him by the throat and began to throttle him. "Pay what you owe me" he said. His fellow servant fell at his feet and implored him, saying, "Give me time and I will pay you". But the other would not agree; on the contrary, he had him thrown into prison till he should pay the debt. His fellow servants were deeply distressed when they saw what had happened, and they went to their master and reported the whole affair to him. Then the master sent for him. "You wicked servant," he said. "I cancelled all that debt of yours when you appealed to me. Were you not bound, then, to have pity on your fellow servant just as I had pity on you?" And in his anger the master handed him over to the torturers till he should pay all his debt. And that is how my heavenly Father will deal with you unless you each forgive your brother from your heart.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Matthew 25:31-46**

*In so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.*

Jesus said to his disciples: 'When the Son of Man comes in his glory, escorted by all the angels, then he will take his seat on his throne of glory. All the nations will be assembled before him and he will separate men one from another as the shepherd separates sheep from goats. He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right hand, "Come, you whom my Father has blessed, take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you made me welcome; naked and you clothed me, sick and you visited me, in prison and you came to see me." Then the virtuous will say to him in reply, "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you; or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and make you welcome; naked and clothe you; sick or in prison and did not come to your help?" Then he will answer, 'I tell you solemnly, in so far as you neglected to do do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me'. And they will go away to eternal punishment, and the virtuous to eternal life.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

## 11

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to a Matthew 26:69-75**

*Peter went outside and wept bitterly.*

Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came up to him and said, 'You too were with Jesus the Galilean.' But he denied it in front of them all. 'I do not know what you are talking about' he said. When he went out to the gateway another servant-girl saw him and said to the people there, 'This man was with Jesus the Nazarene.' And again, with an oath, he denied it, 'I do not know the man.' A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, 'You are one of them for sure! Why, your accent gives you away.' Then he started calling down curses on himself and swearing, 'I do not know the man.' At that moment the cock crew, and Peter remembered what Jesus had said, 'Before the cock crows you will have disowned me three times.' And he went outside and wept bitterly.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Mark 12:28-34**

*The first of all the commandments.*

One of the scribes who had listened to them debating and had observed how well Jesus had answered the Sadducees, now came up and put a question to him, 'Which is the first of all the commandments?' Jesus replied, 'This is the first: Listen, Israel, the Lord our God is the one Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You must love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.' The scribe said to him, 'Well spoken, Master; what you have said is true: that he is one and there is no other. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself, this is far more important than any holocaust or sacrifice.' Jesus, seeing how wisely he had spoken, said, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.' And after that no one dared to question him any more.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

## 13

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 7:36-50**

*Her sins, her many sins, must have been forgiven her, or she would not have shown great love.*

One of the Pharisees invited Jesus to a meal. When he arrived at the Pharisee's house and took his place at table, a woman came in, who had a bad name in the town. She had heard he was dining with the Pharisee and had brought with her an alabaster jar of ointment. She waited behind him at his feet, weeping, and her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them away with her hair; then she covered his feet with kisses and anointed them with the ointment.

When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would know who this woman is that is touching him and what a bad name she has.' Then Jesus took him up and said, 'Simon, I have something to say to you: 'Speak, Master' was the reply. 'There was once a creditor who had two men in his debt; one owed him five hundred denarii, the other fifty. They were unable to pay, so he pardoned them both. Which of them will love him more?' 'The one who was pardoned more, I suppose' answered Simon. Jesus said, 'You are right.'

Then he turned to the woman. 'Simon,' he said 'you see this woman? I came into your house, and you poured no water over my feet, but she has poured out her tears over my feet and wiped them away with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but she has been covering my feet with kisses ever since I came in. you did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. For this reason I tell you that her sins, her many sins, must have been forgiven her, or she would not have shown such great love. It is the man who is forgiven little who shows little love. Then he said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.' Those who were with him at table began to say to themselves, 'Who is this man that he even forgives sins. But he said to the woman; 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

14

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 13:1-5**

*Unless you repent you will all perish as they did.*

Some people arrived and told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with that of their sacrifices. At this he said to them, 'Do you suppose these Galileans who suffered like that were greater sinners than any other Galileans? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen on whom the tower at Siloam fell and killed them? Do you suppose that they were more guilty than all the other people living in Jerusalem? They were not, I tell you. No; but unless you repent you will all perish as they did.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

15

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 15:1-10**

*There will be rejoicing in heaven over one repentant sinner.*

The tax collectors and the sinners were all seeking the company of Jesus to hear what he had to say, and the Pharisees and the scribes complained. 'This man' they said 'welcomes sinners and eats with them.' So he spoke this parable to them: 'What man among you with a hundred sheep, losing one, would not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the missing one till he found it? And when he found it, would he not joyfully take it on his shoulders and then, when he got home, call together his friends and neighbours? "Rejoice with me," he would say "I have found my

sheep that was lost." In the same way, I tell you, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one repentant sinner than over ninety-nine virtuous men who have no need of repentance.

'Or again, what woman with ten drachmas would not, if she lost one, light a lamp and sweep out the house and search thoroughly till she found it? And then, when she had found it, call together her friends and neighbours? "Rejoice with me," she would say "I have found the drachma I lost." In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing among the angels of God over one repentant sinner.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

16

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke 15:11-32**

*While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly.*

Jesus told this parable: 'A man had two sons. The younger said to his father, "Father, let me have the share of the estate that would come to me". So the father divided the property between them. A few days later, the younger son got together everything he had and left for a distant country where he squandered his money on a life of debauchery.

'When he had spent it all, that country experienced a severe famine, and now he began to feel the pinch, so he hired himself out to one of the local inhabitants who put him on his farm to feed the pigs. And he would willingly have filled his belly with the husks the pigs were eating but no one offered him anything. Then he came to his senses and said, "How many of my father's paid servants have more food than they want, and here am I dying of hunger! I will leave this place and go to my father and say: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you; I no longer deserve to be called your son; treat me as one of your paid servants." So he left the place and went back to his father.

'While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity. He ran to the boy, clasped him in his arms and kissed him tenderly. Then his son said, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I no longer deserve to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Bring out the best robe and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the calf we have been fattening, and kill it; we are going to have a feast, a celebration, because this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found." And they began to celebrate.

'Now the elder son was out in the fields, and on his way back, as he drew near the house, he could

hear music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it was all about. "Your brother has come" replied the servant "and your father has killed the calf we had fattened because he has got him back safe and sound." He was angry then and refused to go in, and his father came out to plead with him; but he answered his father, "Look, all these years I have slaved for you and never once disobeyed your orders, yet you never offered me so much as a kid for me to celebrate with my friends. But, for this son of yours, when he comes back after swallowing up your property – he and his women – you kill the calf we had been fattening."

'The father said, "My son, you are with me always and all I have is yours. But it was only right we should celebrate and rejoice, because your brother here was dead and has come to life; he was lost and is found".'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

## 17

### **A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke**

**17:1-4**

*If your brother wrongs you seven times a day and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I am sorry', you must forgive him.*

Jesus said to his disciples, 'Obstacles are sure to come, but alas for the one who provide them! It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone put round his neck than that he should lead astray a single one of these little ones. Watch yourselves!

'If your brother does something wrong, reprove him and, if he is sorry, forgive him. And if he wrongs you seven times a day and seven times comes back to you and says, "I am sorry", you must forgive him.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

## 18

### **A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke**

**18:9-14**

*God, be merciful to me, a sinner.*

Jesus spoke the following parable to some people who prided themselves on being virtuous and despised everyone else: 'Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee, the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood there and said this prayer to himself, "I thank you, God, that I am not grasping, unjust, adulterous like the rest of mankind, and particularly that I am not like this tax collector here. I fast twice a week; I pay tithes on all I get." The tax collector stood some distance

away, not daring even to raise his eyes to heaven; but he beat his breast and said, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner". This man, I tell you, went home again at rights with God; the other did not. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled but the man who humbles himself will be exalted.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

## 19

### **A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke**

**19:1-10**

*The Son of Man has come to seek out and save what was lost.*

Jesus entered Jericho and was going through the town when a man whose name was Zacchaeus made his appearance; he was one of the senior tax collectors and a wealthy man. He was anxious to see what kind of man Jesus was, but he was too short and could not see him for the crowd; so he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to catch a glimpse of Jesus who was to pass that way. When Jesus reached the spot he looked up and spoke to him: 'Zacchaeus, come down. Hurry, because I must stay at your house today.' And he hurried down and welcomed him joyfully. They all complained when they saw what was happening. 'He has gone to stay at a sinner's house' they said. But Zacchaeus stood his ground and said to the Lord, 'Look, sir, I am going to give half my property to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody I will pay him back four times the amount.' And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because this man too is a son of Abraham, for the Son of Man has come to seek out and save what was lost.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

## 20

### **A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke**

**23:39-43**

*Today you will be with me in paradise.*

One of the criminals hanging there abused Jesus. 'Are you not the Christ?' he said. 'Save yourself and us as well.' But the other spoke up and rebuked him. 'Have you no fear of God at all?' he said. 'You got the same sentence as he did, but in our case we deserved it: we are paying for what we did. But this man has done nothing. Jesus,' he said 'remember me when you come into your kingdom.' 'Indeed, I promise you,' he replied 'today you will be with me in paradise.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to John  
8:1-11**

*Go away, and don't sin any more.*

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

At daybreak he appeared in the Temple again; and as all the people came to him, he sat down and began to teach them.

The scribes and Pharisees brought a woman along who had been caught committing adultery; and making her stand there in full view of everybody, they said to Jesus, 'Master, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery, and Moses has ordered us in the Law to condemn women like this to death by stoning. What have you to say?' They asked him this as a test, looking for something to use against him. But Jesus bent down and started writing on the ground with his finger. As they persisted with their question, he looked up and said, 'If there is one of you who has not sinned, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.' Then he bent down and wrote on the ground again. When they heard this they went away one by one, beginning with the eldest, until Jesus was left alone with the woman, who remained standing there. He looked up and said, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' 'No one, sir' she replied. 'Neither do I condemn you,' said Jesus 'go away, and don't sin any more.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to John 8:31-36**

*Everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin.*

To the Jews who believed in him Jesus said:

'If you make my word your home  
you will indeed be my disciples,  
you will learn the truth  
and the truth will make you free.'

They answered, 'We are descended from Abraham and we have never been the slaves of anyone; what do you mean "You will be made free"?' Jesus replied:

'I tell you most solemnly,  
everyone who commits sin is a slave.  
Now the slave's place in the house is not  
assured,  
but the son's place is assured.  
So if the Son makes you free,  
you will be free indeed.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to John  
15:1-8**

*Every branch in me that bears no fruit he cuts away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes to make it bear even more.*

Jesus said to his disciples:

'I am the true vine,  
and my Father is the vinedresser.  
Every branch in me that bears no fruit  
he cuts away,  
and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes  
to make it bear even more.  
You are pruned already,  
by means of the word that I have spoken to you.  
Make your home in me, as I make mine in you.  
As a branch cannot bear fruit all by itself,  
but must remain part of the vine,  
neither can you unless you remain in me.  
I am the vine,  
you are the branches.  
Whoever remains in me, with me in him,  
bears fruit in plenty;  
for cut off from me you can do nothing.  
Anyone who does not remain in me  
is like a branch that has been thrown away  
– he withers;  
these branches are collected and thrown on the  
fire,  
and they are burnt.  
If you remain in me  
and my words remain in you,  
you may ask what you will  
and you shall get it.  
It is to the glory of my Father that you should  
bear much fruit,  
and then you will be my disciples.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**A reading from the holy Gospel according to John  
15:9-14**

*You are my friends if you do what I command you.*

Jesus said to his disciples:

'As the Father has loved me,  
so I have loved you.  
Remain in my love.  
If you keep my commandments  
you will remain in my love,  
just as I have kept my Father's commandments

and remain in his love.  
I have told you this  
so that my own joy may be in you  
and your joy be complete.  
This is my commandment:  
love one another,  
as I have loved you.  
A man can have no greater love  
than to lay down his life for his friends.  
You are my friends,  
if you do what I command you.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

## 25

### **A reading from the holy Gospel according to John 19:13-37**

*They will look on the one whom they have pierced.*

Pilate had Jesus brought out, and seated himself on the chair of judgement at a place called the Pavement, in Hebrew Gabbatha. It was Passover Preparation Day, about the sixth hour. 'Here is your king,' said Pilate to the Jews. 'Take him away, take him, away!' they said. 'Crucify him!' 'Do you want me to crucify your king?' said Pilate. The chief priests answered, 'We have no king except Caesar.' So in the end Pilate handed him over to them to be crucified.

They then took charge of Jesus, and carrying his own cross he went out of the city to the place of the skull or, as it was called in Hebrew, Golgotha, where they crucified him with two others, one on either side with Jesus in the middle. Pilate wrote out a notice and had it fixed to the cross; it ran: 'Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews.' This notice was read by many of the Jews, because the place where Jesus was crucified was not far from the city, and the writing was in Hebrew Latin and Greek. So the Jewish chief priests said to Pilate, 'You should not write "King of the Jews", but "This man said: I am King of the Jews".' Pilate answered, 'What I have written, I have written.'

When the soldiers had finished crucifying Jesus they took his clothing and divided it into four shares, one for each soldier. His undergarment was seamless, woven in one piece from neck to hem; so they said to one another, 'Instead of tearing it, let's throw dice to decide who is to have it.' In this way the words of scripture were fulfilled:

They shared out my clothing among them.  
They cast lots for my clothes.

This is exactly what the soldiers did.

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary

of Magdala. Seeing his mother and the disciple he loved standing near her, Jesus said to his mother, 'Woman, this is your son.' Then to the disciple he said, 'This is your mother.' And from that moment the disciple made a place for her in his home.

After this, Jesus knew that everything had now been completed, and to fulfil the scripture perfectly he said:

'I am thirsty.'

A jar full of vinegar stood there, so putting a sponge soaked in the vinegar on a hyssop stick they held it up to his mouth. After Jesus had taken the vinegar he said, 'It is accomplished'; and bowing his head he gave up his spirit.

It was Preparation Day, and to prevent the bodies remaining on the cross during the sabbath – since that sabbath was a day of special solemnity – the Jews asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken away. Consequently the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with him and then of the other. When they came to Jesus, they found he was already dead, and so instead of breaking his legs one of the soldiers pierced his side with a lance; and immediately there came out blood and water. This is the evidence of one who saw it – trustworthy evidence, and he knows he speaks the truth – and he gives it so that you may believe as well. Because all this happened to fulfil the words of scripture:

Not one bone of his will be broken;

and again in another place scripture says:

They will look on the one whom they have pierced.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

## 26

### **A reading from the holy Gospel according to John 20:19-23**

*Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven.*

In the evening of that same day, the first day of the week, the doors were closed in the room where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them, for fear of the Jews. Jesus came and stood among them. He said to them, 'Peace be with you,' and showed them his hands and his side. The disciples were filled with joy when they saw the Lord, and he said to them again, 'Peace be with you.'

'As the Father sent me,  
so am I sending you.'



After saying this he breathed on them and said:

'Receive the Holy Spirit.  
For those whose sins you forgive,  
they are forgiven;  
for those whose sins you retain,  
they are retained.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

