**JANUARY 2018**

## FIRST DECADE OF JANUARY

## GLORIFYING AND PRAISING GOD

## Nm 6,22-27; Ps 66; Gal 4,4-7; Lk 2,16-21

### 1 JANUARY – OUR LADY MARY MOTHER OF GOD

Glorifying and praising the Lord is the purest act of latria. You recognize God as the author of all good. For every event of history always the true worshipers of God raised to Him hymns of praise, glory, magnificence and honour. He is the Lord who creates everything, works everything and all wants only for the salvation of the creature made by him in his image and likeness. Jesus also praises and blesses, glorifies and exalts the Father.

*At that time Jesus said in reply, "I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him (Mt 11,25-27).*

Saint Paul blesses the Father because He has redeemed us in Christ and in Him has opened to us the heart of His mercy, bestowing on us all good of salvation, redemption, sanctification, life, peace, joy, love, piety and compassion. Every good of God is given to us by Jesus Christ. Nothing is given except for Christ, in Christ and with Christ.

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavens, as he chose us in him, before the foundation of the world, to be holy and without blemish before him. In love he destined us for adoption to himself through Jesus Christ, in accord with the favour of his will, for the praise of the glory of his grace that he granted us in the beloved. In him we have redemption by his blood, the forgiveness of transgressions, in accord with the riches of his grace that he lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight, he has made known to us the mystery of his will in accord with his favour that he set forth in him as a plan for the fullness of times, to sum up all things in Christ, in heaven and on earth. In him we were also chosen, destined in accord with the purpose of the one who accomplishes all things according to the intention of his will, so that we might exist for the praise of his glory, we who first hoped in Christ. In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised holy Spirit, which is the first instalment of our inheritance toward redemption as God's possession, to the praise of his glory.*

Even the Virgin Mary magnifies her Lord for the great things he has done for her.

*And Mary said: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord; my spirit rejoices in God my saviour. For he has looked upon his handmaid's lowliness; behold, from now on will all ages call me blessed. The Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is from age to age to those who fear him. He has shown might with his arm, dispersed the arrogant of mind and heart. He has thrown down the rulers from their thrones but lifted up the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things; the rich he has sent away empty. He has helped Israel his servant, remembering his mercy, according to his promise to our fathers, to Abraham and to his descendants forever" (Lk 1,46-55).*

The shepherds glorify and praise God for what they have heard and seen. They attest that what has happened is not a human event. It is history all worked with the finger of God.

*So they went in haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known the message that had been told them about this child. All who heard it were amazed by what had been told them by the shepherds. And Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart. Then the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, just as it had been told to them. When eight days were completed for his circumcision, he was named Jesus, the name given him by the angel before he was conceived in the womb.*

Contemplating Mary, we must glorify and praise the Lord. Not only because she was always all made with the finger of God, even with all his hands and his heart. But also because in his great benevolence, she was given us as our Mother. He loves the Virgin Mary, who praises the Lord and blesses him for such a great gift.

Angels, saints, help us to praise the Lord for having given us such a great Mother.

## I AM THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING OUT IN THE DESERT

## 1 Jn 2,22-28; Ps 97; Jn 1,19-28

### 2 JANUARY

John the Baptist is a most honest and humble person before God and men. He not only confesses that He is neither Christ, nor the prophet, nor Elijah. These were the three promises made by God, the first to David, the second to Moses, the third through the prophet Malachi to his people. Not only does he say that Jesus is so great that he is not even worthy to untie the lace of his sandal. His great humility is attested and revealed by the identity that he reveals of himself to us. He does not even declare himself to be a prophet. He simply says he is, *"the voice of one crying in the desert."* But, he is a voice with a special and particular mission: he must invite every man to make the Lord's way straight. The Lord is about to come and it is necessary that each one prepares him the way.

The road is prepared through the return to the Law. One repents for every transgression. He goes back into the Commandments. He is committed to always stay in them, giving them the closest obedience. There is no real contact with God except in his Law. John prepares the hearts to enter the Law. Jesus instead comes to make every man enter into his heart making him become his heart so that it obeys God as He obeys and loves the Father as He loves him. In this the difference of mission between John and Jesus is infinitely great. John brings into the Law, Jesus brings into his heart, so that from his heart one has the way paved to enter into the Father's heart and to remain in it for eternity. The ultimate goal is the heart of the Father.

Today, our pastoral action is failing in this. The end is lacking, both of John's end: bringing every heart into the Law of God so as this heart to be able to meet with Jesus Christ and it is lacking of Christ’s end: bringing into his heart, using it as a holy vehicle to bring into the Father's heart. A pastoral without Commandments, without Law, without the heart of Christ, without leading to the heart of the Father is without purpose. Either we give the pastoral its supernatural, divine, eternal, Christic, ecclesial, evangelical, sacramental, ascetic end, or we work in vain. A heart that is not brought into the Law, into the heart of Christ and into the heart of the Father is delivered to the prince of this world for its eternal ruin.

*And this is the testimony of John. When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests and Levites (to him) to ask him, "Who are you?" he admitted and did not deny it, but admitted, "I am not the Messiah." So they asked him, "What are you then? Are you Elijah?" And he said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." So they said to him, "Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us? What do you have to say for yourself?" He said: "I am 'the voice of one crying out in the desert, "Make straight the way of the Lord,"' as Isaiah the prophet said." Some Pharisees were also sent. They asked him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah or Elijah or the Prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water; but there is one among you whom you do not recognize, the one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to untie." This happened in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was baptizing.*

A pastoral is always failing when the man changes its initial design. When Moses was invited to build the tent of meeting, the Lord commanded him that it be changed in nothing but everything executed according to the plan that had been revealed to him on the mountain. Moses must give shape to what he has seen in the holy heavens of God.

*This Dwelling and all its furnishings you shall make exactly according to the pattern that I will now show you (Ex 25,9). Bezalel, therefore, will set to work with Oholiab and with all the experts whom the Lord has endowed with skill and understanding in knowing how to execute all the work for the service of the sanctuary, just as the Lord has commanded (Ex 36,1).*

Jesus also attests that He does everything according to the ways he saw at his Father’s. If pastoral workers are not the voice that prepare hearts to meet with Christ, all their work is in vain. It is no use to bring man to man, if then, he is not brought to Christ Jesus. The purpose of every pastoral is to introduce into the heart of Jesus.

Virgin Mary, Mother of Redemption, Angels and Saints, make us real pastoral workers.

## NOW I HAVE SEEN AND TESTIFIED

## 1 Jn 2,9-3,6; Ps 97; Jn 1,29-34

**3 JANUARY**

A testimony to be true must be grounded on man's senses. Eyes, ears, nose, taste and touch are essential for those who have to report the events. The Lord has always used the eyes and ears of his prophets to reveal himself. In the Sanhedrin Peter also states that he cannot silence what he has seen and heard. To deny what has been seen, heard, touched, tasted and smelled, would mean to be declared non-men. If then what has been before us is misguided, changed with an end to evil, then you are dishonest, wicked and bad. We know that soldiers were paid to say that Jesus' body had been stolen. Man is capable of everything, even selling and declaring himself non-man.

*Observing the boldness of Peter and John and perceiving them to be uneducated, ordinary men, they were amazed, and they recognized them as the companions of Jesus. Then when they saw the man who had been cured standing there with them, they could say nothing in reply. So they ordered them to leave the Sanhedrin, and conferred with one another, saying, "What are we to do with these men? Everyone living in Jerusalem knows that a remarkable sign was done through them, and we cannot deny it. But so that it may not be spread any further among the people, let us give them a stern warning never again to speak to anyone in this name." So they called them back and ordered them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. Peter and John, however, said to them in reply, "Whether it is right in the sight of God for us to obey you rather than God, you be the judges. It is impossible for us not to speak about what we have seen and heard." After threatening them further, they released them, finding no way to punish them, on account of the people who were all praising God for what had happened. For the man on whom this sign of healing had been done was over forty years old (At 4,13-22).*

It is evident that if Christ does not become an essential part of the Christian, there is an announcement, but there is no witness. The Holy Spirit did not make us announcers of Christ, but his witnesses. You are witnesses by saying what the Spirit has done of us in Christ Jesus, what every day he makes of us in him. John receives a definite word from the Lord: *"The one on whom you will see the Spirit descend and remain, it is he the one that baptizes in the Holy Spirit."* The word has been heard. Now it is necessary that you see its fulfilment. The Holy Spirit descends and poses himself as a dove on Jesus. John sees. What he has heard is fuliflled. He testifies that Jesus is the Son of God.

*The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He is the one of whom I said, 'A man is coming after me who ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.' I did not know him, but the reason why I came baptizing with water was that he might be made known to Israel." John testified further, saying, "I saw the Spirit come down like a dove from the sky and remain upon him. I did not know him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'On whomever you see the Spirit come down and remain, he is the one who will baptize with the holy Spirit.' Now I have seen and testified that he is the Son of God."*

Let us now take a word of Christ Jesus said to us, *"Whoever eats me will live for me."*

*Jesus said to them, "Amen, amen, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life within you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me and I in him. Just as the living Father sent me and I have life because of the Father, so also the one who feeds on me will have life because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Unlike your ancestors who ate and still died, whoever eats this bread will live forever" (Jn 6,53-58).*

We take the Eucharist, eat the body and the blood of Christ. When can we be his witnesses? When we live for Christ. When we obey his every Word. We are far from any sin. We free ourselves from all vice. Then we can testify that the Eucharist is the food that cleanses us from all sin and makes us pure for our God. Then we can invite every other man to become pure for the Eucharist.

Virgin Mary, Mother of Redemption, Angels and Saints, make us true witnesses of Jesus.

## THEN HE BROUGHT HIM TO JESUS

## 1Jn 3,7-10; Ps 97; Jn 1,35-42

### 4 JANUARY

There is no pastoral if we do not lead to Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit also does *"pastoral"* to lead to Christ, to make Christ's body. Carrying out a mission without the purpose of placing Jesus Christ in the heart of man is certainly not a Christian mission, because there is no Holy Spirit motion in it.

*Now Saul, still breathing murderous threats against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus, that, if he should find any men or women who belonged to the Way, he might bring them back to Jerusalem in chains. On his journey, as he was nearing Damascus, a light from the sky suddenly flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" He said, "Who are you, sir?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. Now get up and go into the city and you will be told what you must do." The men who were travelling with him stood speechless, for they heard the voice but could see no one. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him to Damascus. For three days he was unable to see, and he neither ate nor drank. There was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias, and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight and ask at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is there praying, and (in a vision) he has seen a man named Ananias come in and lay (his) hands on him, that he may regain his sight." But Ananias replied, "Lord, I have heard from many sources about this man, what evil things he has done to your holy ones in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to imprison all who call upon your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for this man is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before Gentiles, kings, and Israelites, and I will show him what he will have to suffer for my name." So Ananias went and entered the house; laying his hands on him, he said, "Saul, my brother, the Lord has sent me, Jesus who appeared to you on the way by which you came, that you may regain your sight and be filled with the holy Spirit." Immediately things like scales fell from his eyes and he regained his sight. He got up and was baptized, and when he had eaten, he recovered his strength (At 9,1-19).*

*Now in Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of the Cohort called the Italica, devout and God-fearing along with his whole household, who used to give alms generously to the Jewish people and pray to God constantly. One afternoon about three o'clock, he saw plainly in a vision an angel of God come in to him and say to him, "Cornelius." He looked intently at him and, seized with fear, said, "What is it, sir?" He said to him, "Your prayers and almsgiving have ascended as a memorial offering before God. Now send some men to Joppa and summon one Simon who is called Peter. He is staying with another Simon, a tanner, who has a house by the sea." When the angel who spoke to him had left, he called two of his servants and a devout soldier from his staff, explained everything to them, and sent them to Joppa (Cf. At 10,1-47).*

John lets his disciples leave him to follow Christ. Christ is the heart of his mission. Andrew meets Simon Peter and immediately tells him of Christ, leading to Christ and bringing to Him. Meeting with Jesus changed the life of Andrew, no longer disciple of John. It will change the life of Simon Peter. It will constitute him the visible foundation and a rock of stability of his Church. If John indicates Christ, Andrew brings to Christ and the Holy Spirit leads to Christ, might there be a true pastoral that does not lead to Christ after having spoken of Him? One speaks and leads.

*The next day John was there again with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God." The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). Then he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Kephas" (which is translated Peter).*

Virgin Mary, Mother of Redemption, Angels and Saints make us bring the hearts to Christ.

## PHILIP SAID TO HIM, "COME AND SEE"

## 1Jn 3,11-21; Ps 99; Jn 1,43-51

### 5 JANUARY

Jesus also brings to Christ. It's his mission. He is the only way that leads to the Father. He alone is the truth and grace of the Father on our earth. We are not with Christ, in Christ, for Christ, we are not in the Father and for the Father. Christ is the irreplaceable one in every relationship of man with God. In Christ everything is entirely true in the relationship with God. Without Christ either everything is false or not fully and perfectly true. Either you lack in the grace, or in the truth, or in the Holy Spirit, or in light and or in life. All of these things are in Christ, they are in Him. We are not in Him, never can we be with him and for him. We can never be in the true God, with the true God and for the true God. Christ is the only essence of religion.

Every religion without Christ is lacking in its true essence. Everything can be beautiful in a religion, but the essence is missing, if Christ is lacking. Who has to believe in this truth? Certainly are not pagans. The first one that believes in this truth is Christ. Every disciple of Christ must believe in it. Today, who no longer believes in this truth is just the Christian. But if the Christian does not believe in this truth, or, whether it is a disciple of Christ or of any other man it makes no difference, one removes to Christ his eternal essence, He is made one like all others who are not the essence of religion. On the contrary, Jesus is the essence of religion because He is the essence of faith, truth, peace, grace, knowledge of God, life, time and eternity. Knowing this, that is how Saint Paul manifests the fullness of the truth of Christ to the Colossians.

*For I want you to know how great a struggle I am having for you and for those in Laodicea and all who have not seen me face to face, that their hearts may be encouraged as they are brought together in love, to have all the richness of fully assured understanding, for the knowledge of the mystery of God, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this so that no one may deceive you by specious arguments. For even if I am absent in the flesh, yet I am with you in spirit, rejoicing as I observe your good order and the firmness of your faith in Christ. So, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, walk in him, rooted in him and built upon him and established in the faith as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. See to it that no one captivate you with an empty, seductive philosophy according to human tradition, according to the elemental powers of the world and not according to Christ. For in him dwells the whole fullness of the deity bodily, and you share in this fullness in him, who is the head of every principality and power. In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not administered by hand, by stripping off the carnal body, with the circumcision of Christ. You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. And even when you were dead (in) transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, he brought you to life along with him, having forgiven us all our transgressions; obliterating the bond against us, with its legal claims, which was opposed to us, he also removed it from our midst, nailing it to the cross; despoiling the principalities and the powers, he made a public spectacle of them, leading them away in triumph by it (Col 2,1-15).*

 They are the very holy words that reveal to us all the essence of Christ for our life.

*The next day he decided to go to Galilee, and he found Philip. And Jesus said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the town of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one about whom Moses wrote in the law, and also the prophets, Jesus, son of Joseph, from Nazareth." But Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Here is a true Israelite. There is no duplicity in him." Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered and said to him, "Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree." Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." Jesus answered and said to him, "Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than this." And he said to him, "Amen, amen, I say to you, you will see the sky opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."*

Jesus reveals to Nathanael that He is the universal Mediator between God, the whole of heaven and every man. For Him, only for Him, one ascends to Heaven. For Him alone, for Him one descends from Heaven.

Virgin Mary, Mother of Redemption, Angels and Saints, make us the truth of Christ in the world.

## WE HAVE COME TO DO HIM HOMAGE

## Is 60,1-6; Ps 71; Eph 3,2-3a.5-6; Mt 2,1-12

### 6 JANUARY – THE LORD’S EPIFANY – SOLEMNITY

The Lord, the Eternal God, the Creator of man through his Word with an eternal council has established that the redemption of the creature made in his image and likeness, that has evaded his obedience, returns to Him through the path of his very creation, but with a substantial difference. Man was created for Christ. Now, he must return to the source of his life, that is his Creator, not only for Christ, but also in Christ, with Him and as his true body. Christ is not only the way, he is also life, truth, grace, mercy, compassion, piety and perfect justice. Christ is proclaimed to man, and is invited to get converted to Him, to let himself be baptized to be born of water and Holy Spirit, to live in the Word of Jesus according to the most pure truth which is always placed in it from the Spirit of God. If he accepts the invitation, he becomes a son in the Son, lives in the Son and for the Son, he will return to the Father, otherwise he will remain without the Father for eternity. For Christ and in Christ to the Father: it is the law of life. There are no other ways, no other modes and no other Laws to be observed.

The Magi see the star in the east and move in search of Christ. From nature they go to Scripture. This tells us all about Christ, but it does not give us Christ. From Scripture they go to the search for the Christ living Person. This means that it is not morality that makes us Christians, but it is being with Christ one thing and one body. We become Christians in Him, for Him and with Him. His person is essential to our lives. Today Christian stupidity is great. First, Christ has been deleted from minds and hearts. Then, the Gospel was cancelled. In the end we are limiting ourselves to some non negotiable principle and today, not even this anymore. The adaptation to the world or the total surrender of the Christian to it is preached. This surrendering to the world is the denial of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, the Church and every sacrament and ministry. Christ that is the heart of God, the heart of the Father, the heart of the Holy Spirit, the heart of the Church, the heart of the Christian and the heart of humanity is lacking. The Magi indicate us the way: from sign to Scripture, from Scripture to the home where the child was, that is, in the Church of the living God.

*Allora Erode, chiamati segretamente i Magi, si fece dire da loro con esattezza il tempo in cui era apparsa la stella e li inviò a Betlemme dicendo: «Andate e informatevi accuratamente sul bambino e, quando l’avrete trovato, fatemelo sapere, perché anch’io venga ad adorarlo». Udito il re, essi partirono. Ed ecco, la stella, che avevano visto spuntare, li precedeva, finché giunse e si fermò sopra il luogo dove si trovava il bambino. Al vedere la stella, provarono una gioia grandissima. Entrati nella casa, videro il bambino con Maria sua madre, si prostrarono e lo adorarono. Poi aprirono i loro scrigni e gli offrirono in dono oro, incenso e mirra. Avvertiti in sogno di non tornare da Erode, per un’altra strada fecero ritorno al loro paese.*

*Then Herod called the magi secretly and ascertained from them the time of the star's appearance. He sent them to Bethlehem and said, "Go and search diligently for the child. When you have found him, bring me word, that I too may go and do him homage." After their audience with the king they set out. And behold, the star that they had seen at its rising preceded them, until it came and stopped over the place where the child was. They were overjoyed at seeing the star, and on entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated themselves and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed for their country by another way.*

However, it is not enough going to church to be Christian. A very true profession of faith is necessary. Christ is the true God. He must be given the incense of our adoration. He is the true God by eternal nature and by the Person generated by the Father in his eternal today, without beginning and end. Without this confession, it is of no avail to go to the Lord's house. He must be confessed as the Messiah not of the Christian, but of every man. Only He is the Saviour and Redeemer of the world. Today this faith no longer exists. Every religion is the way - it is said - to go to God. It is a way without Christ, regardless of Him. It is the error that leads the Church to death. But Jesus is also the Suffering, the One who saves us because he takes upon himself all the sins of the world. If Christ does not atone, sin remains forever in the heart and in the soul. One does enter Heaven as a sinner.

Virgin Mary, Mother of Redemption, Angels and Saints teach us the truth of Christ.

**THE SPIRIT DESCENDING UPON HIM**

## Is 55,1-11; C Is 12,2.4-6; 1 Jn 5,1-9; Mk 1,7-11

### 7 JANUARY – THE LORD’S BAPTISM B

If Jesus to begin his mission of redemption and salvation, he who is God by eternal nature and Son of God by generation in the today of timeless eternity, in his humanity has been filled with the Holy Spirit, might there be on earth a man his disciple who can only imagine living an evangelical mission for the salvation of his brothers if he is not full, packed, rather jammed with the Holy Spirit? Let us look at things well from the Gospel according to Luke. For the disciples to understand his mystery they need the Spirit of wisdom and knowledge. Then he commands them – just as he will do in the Acts of the Apostles - not to move until they are not filled with power from above. If the Holy Spirit is not in the missionary, there is no evangelical mission of salvation and redemption. The missionary himself lives of darkness and gloom. He himself will not recognize the temptations of Satan on his way.

*Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures. And he said to them, "Thus it is written that the Messiah would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that repentance, for the forgiveness of sins, would be preached in his name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And (behold) I am sending the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high" (Lk 24,45-49).* *While meeting with them, he enjoined them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for "the promise of the Father about which you have heard me speak; for John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the holy Spirit." When they had gathered together they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" He answered them, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by his own authority. But you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (At 1, 4-8).*

The humanity of Christ Jesus, though most holy, is always humanity. If Satan tempted the woman at the origins of history to make her fall, he will also tempt Christ so that he falls and does not operate salvation. The Father provides for this not to happen. He envelopes and fills him with Holy Spirit. That He is filled with the Holy Spirit it is attested by him in the desert. He leaves no room so that Satan's thoughts enters into his heart. He responds him with the immediate and pure Word of his Father. In the wisdom of the Holy Spirit he knows the truth of every Word of Scripture. In the science he knows all the words of Scripture. With the fortitude he gives such a true answer that does not allow the devil any reply. With the Prince of Darkness, there is no dialogue. Dialogue is death.

*And this is what he proclaimed: "One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the holy Spirit." It happened in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan by John. On coming up out of the water he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit, like a dove, descending upon him. And a voice came from the heavens, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."*

The Holy Spirit lights on Jesus as a dove, to reveal to the Gentiles that He is not a Messiah of war, of blood, of destruction of peoples and nations. He comes as a way of peace of man with God and man with every other man. The Old Testament has forever ended. Now you enter the New Alliance. From war you go to peace, from vengeance to forgiveness, from the request of righteousness to prayer to obtain mercy from God. The voice of the Father, that declares Jesus, his Son, the beloved, in whom He is well pleased, tells us instead that He is the true Messiah promised in Psalms, in the Law and in the Prophets. Whoever wants to know the ways of his Messianism must draw them from Scripture. He will find in it that he will be a Messiah with great suffering, for he will be the Suffering Servant and the Just Persecuted, upon whom all the strength of the world's sin will beat down. From this moment on Jesus stands on the chariot of the Spirit, just as God had once placed himself on the cherubs' carriage and carried by them to every place and direction. Jesus goes where the Holy Spirit moves or drives him.

Virgin Mary, Mother of Redemption, Angels and Saints, make us obedient to the Spirit.

## REPENT, AND BELIEVE IN THE GOSPEL

## 1Sam 1,1-8; Ps 115; Mk 1,14-20

### 8 JANUARY

Conversion not to God, to a God, to Christ, to a Christ, is instead to the last Word of God, Lord and Creator of man, that reaches to the ear of his creature. Adam must be converted to the second and third Word of God. He cannot build his life by stopping only at the first.

*God blessed them, saying: "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on the earth" (Gen 1,28). The Lord God gave man this order: "You are free to eat from any of the trees of the garden except the tree of knowledge of good and bad. From that tree you shall not eat; the moment you eat from it you are surely doomed to die" (Gen 2,16-17). The Lord God said: "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him." So the Lord God cast a deep sleep on the man, and while he was asleep, he took out one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. The Lord God then built up into a woman the rib that he had taken from the man. When he brought her to the man, the man said: "This one, at last, is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; This one shall be called 'woman,' for out of 'her man' this one has been taken." That is why a man leaves his father and mother and clings to his wife, and the two of them become one body (Cf, 2,18-24).*

Abraham also must pass from the first Word of the Lord to the last. Without conversion, our journey with our God is stopped. The history of life is blocked.

*The Lord said to Abram: "Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father's house to a land that I will show you. "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the communities of the earth shall find blessing in you"* *(Gen 12,1-3). Sometime after these events, God put Abraham to the test. He called to him, "Abraham!" "Ready!" he replied. Then God said: "Take your son Isaac, your only one, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah. There you shall offer him up as a holocaust on a height that I will point out to you"* *(Gen 22,1-2).*

The people of God are called to a continual conversion. From Abraham it must go to Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. Commandments must be converted to the Beatitudes. All the Old Testament must go to the New. All the Law, the Prophets and the Psalms must be converted to the Word of Jesus Christ. But even the Church must always be converted to the whole truth to which she is led by the Holy Spirit. It's the Law of Life.

Jesus begins his ministry. He immediately calls for conversion and faith in the Gospel. The people of the Lord must leave all the ancient Words of God and move to his Word. They must accept his Person and build on it the house of true faith.

*After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: "This is the time of fulfilment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." As he passed by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea; they were fishermen. Jesus said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." Then they abandoned their nets and followed him. He walked along a little farther and saw James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They too were in a boat mending their nets. Then he called them. So they left their father Zebedee in the boat along with the hired men and followed him.*

Conversion and faith in the Gospel is the perennial vocation of the Christian and man. Christ is the only way of life. There are no others. Without him man remains in his death, not only of the body, but of the soul and the spirit. Today, Jesus calls four men: Simon, Andrew, James, and John, as they were on the seashore setting their nets. He calls them because tomorrow they will have to go to the world to call every man so that he gets converted to Christ and his Word. There will no longer be any other man whom the Lord will send and to whom you will have to be converted. From this moment on, Christ is the only Person and the only Word to which every other will have to be converted.

Virgin Mary, Mother of Redemption, Angels and Saints, make us of pure faith in Christ.

## HAVE YOU COME TO DESTROY US?

## 1Sam 1,9-20; C 1 Sam 2,1.4-8; Mk 1,21b-28

### 9 JANUARY

Satan knows that only Jesus Christ can ruin his kingdom of darkness and falsehood. He knows who the Lord is and for this reason every opportunity is exploited favourably by him to create difficulties and thus prevent him from fulfilling his mission. His temptations are direct and indirect, obvious and occult, he uses the rebellious angels and even the men who by now are under his power. He also wants to use his taumaturgical powers to impede him in his mission of evangelization. In the synagogue there is a man possessed by an impure spirit who shouts: *"What do you want from us, Jesus of Nazareth? Did you come to ruin us? I know who you are, the saint of God!"* When Satan tells the truth, he certainly does not do it for the good of the person but for his ruin.

We know that in Jesus times and moments are determined by the Father, through his Holy Spirit. Even each word of revelation, of the Gospel, has to be said in one time instead of another. At present Jesus is silent about his true identity. He presents himself to the world more as a prophet than as a Messiah. There would have been a serious injury to his Person if the people had recognized him as a Messiah and had acclaimed him. He would have been immediately caught and eliminated. His mission would have failed. But this is what Satan wants: that Jesus does not fulfil the Father's mandate and for this reason he tempts him without interruption, through every means.

But Jesus is strong in the Holy Spirit. He knows what the intentions of the prince of darkness are and imposes him absolute silence. The words spoken speak of severity: *"And Jesus commanded him severely: Quite! Come out of him!"* The impure spirit before an order of his God can only obey. He obeys, but not without having causing further damage to the one whom he had seized: *"And the unclean spirit, shaking him and crying out loud, came out of him."* In the command all the strength of the Spirit of the Lord that works in Christ Jesus is revealed. In the obedience of the unclean spirit, all his wickedness and iniquity are revealed. The devil always acts as a devil, even when he obeys, when he speaks, when he is manifested and when he works. His nature is perverse. He cannot but work according to the wickedness and evilness that is his new essence after he has rebelled against God and from light has become darkness.

*Then they came to Capernaum, and on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught. The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes. In their synagogue was a man with an unclean spirit; he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are - the Holy One of God!" Jesus rebuked him and said, "Quiet! Come out of him!" The unclean spirit convulsed him and with a loud cry came out of him. All were amazed and asked one another, "What is this? A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him." His fame spread everywhere throughout the whole region of Galilee.*

People present in the synagogue see something new, never happened before. Being the thing new, the person is new too. The works manifest the essence of a man and his nature. The novelty is transformed into a need for understanding: *"What ever is this? A new teaching given with authority. He even commands unclean spirits and they obey him!"* The new Person does new works. New works manifest a new person. For new works we must confess that Jesus is different than all those who preceded him. There has never been in Israel a person like Jesus the Lord. His uniqueness in works is also uniqueness in the Person and uniqueness in the mission. Christ's novelty does not stop in the synagogue. It crosses the threshold and spreads throughout the Galilee region. This is the power of works. Now if the Gospel is the power of God for all those who believe in it, every believer is obliged to show all its power by transforming it into a work. This is the truth of every evangelizer, but also of every Christian: transforming the Gospel into life, but for this it is necessary to change nature: from nature, according to flesh, it must become spiritual.

Virgin Mary, Mother of Redemption, Angels and Saints, make us strong in the Holy Spirit.

## FOR THIS PURPOSE HAVE I COME

## 1Sam 3,1-10.19-20; Ps 39; Mk 1,29-39

### 10 JANUARY

Satan wants Jesus from his will and for this he tempts him. Men also want Jesus from their will. The sick want to be healed by Him. The crucifixes want him to get them off the cross. The hungry ask him for other bread. Scribes and Pharisees annoy him, even with grave slanders, because he is not from their doctrine. On every step of Christ, is set a trap for him to fall. Everyone wants him on his side: Satan, men, sick, scribes, Pharisees, chief priests and elders of the people. We know that his disciples also want him on their side. Peter tempts him so that he does not go to Jerusalem. James and John ask him for a place of excellence in his kingdom. Judas will sell him to the high priests because his thoughts do not fit in with those of Christ Jesus, his Master. This is the life of Jesus on our earth.

But Jesus can only be from the will of the Father. If he becomes even for a moment from the will of the creature, he is no longer the Messiah of the Lord, but the servant of men. He serves men, but always from the will of the Father. He is not the servant of men, but the Servant of the Lord. The passage from God's will to the will of creatures is a constant temptation even in the disciple of Jesus. He must always have to wonder, *"Am I the servant of Christ Jesus or am I servant of myself or the servant of creatures? Am I, that is, from the will of God or from my will or the will of men?"* Salvation is only accomplished when we are from the will of God. From the will of creatures there might never be true salvation, for redemption is the fruit of our obedience. Without obedience there is no salvation. A sacrifice to the Lord was not made of our lives.

*On leaving the synagogue he entered the house of Simon and Andrew with James and John. Simon's mother-in-law lay sick with a fever. They immediately told him about her. He approached, grasped her hand, and helped her up. Then the fever left her and she waited on them. When it was evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were ill or possessed by demons. The whole town was gathered at the door. He cured many who were sick with various diseases, and he drove out many demons, not permitting them to speak because they knew him. Rising very early before dawn, he left and went off to a deserted place, where he prayed. Simon and those who were with him pursued him and on finding him said, "Everyone is looking for you." He told them, "Let us go on to the nearby villages that I may preach there also. For this purpose have I come." So he went into their synagogues, preaching and driving out demons throughout the whole of Galilee.*

That Jesus in works, words and decisions, is always from the Father, is revealed by him in a very special way in the Gospel according to John. He places this truth as a seal to all his mission. It is the seal that He in everything said or done, everything is by the will of his Father. Nothing is from his heart. Nothing from the will of the creatures.

*Jesus cried out and said, "Whoever believes in me believes not only in me but also in the one who sent me, and whoever sees me sees the one who sent me. I came into the world as light, so that everyone who believes in me might not remain in darkness. And if anyone hears my words and does not observe them, I do not condemn him, for I did not come to condemn the world but to save the world. Whoever rejects me and does not accept my words has something to judge him: the word that I spoke, it will condemn him on the last day, because I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. So what I say, I say as the Father told me" (Jn 12, 33-50).*

Also in the answer to Simon and to those who were with him, we can deduce this full dependence of Jesus from the Father: *"Let us go elsewhere, to the nearby villages, so that I may preach there also; this is why I came!"*. The Father tells Jesus to abandon the sick and He leaves the city and obeys the Father, going all through Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons. This law is valid for every disciple. No one has to make himself from his will. Everyone must always be from the will of their Master. For this it is necessary that they are in the Holy Spirit as Jesus is.

Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, Angels and Saints make us from the Spirit of the Lord.

**JANUARY 2018**

## SECOND DECADE OF JANUARY

## SEE THAT YOU TELL NO ONE ANYTHING

## 1Sam 4,1-11; Ps 43; Mk 1,40-45

### 11 JANUARY

A leper calls on Jesus to be healed. Let us observe with what humbleness he is presented to Him: *"If you will, you can purify me!"* If you want, that is, if this is the will of God on you. If your Father grants it to you. Omnipotence is never a rule of action. Omnipotence must always be used according to divine will. Think today of the omnipotence of science. It is becoming the only principle of truth. I am able to do? Therefore I do. What? Whatever I can. If the omnipotence of science is not placed under the government of the divine will, tomorrow humanity might also be destroyed. This rule also applies to the omnipotence of man's will. All of man in thoughts, desires, will, science and wisdom must be placed under the will of God and all use in the greatest respect of the divine will.

Jesus is omnipotent because he is the true God, in his nature and divine person. Yet all his omnipotence is subject to the divine will of the Father. What the Father wants, he wants. What the Father does not want, he does not want. This is the true greatness of a man: transforming his personal "omnipotence" into pure and uninterrupted obedience to his Father. When omnipotence is taken away from obedience, it is possible to reach any abomination, disgrace, crime and massacre. We often condemn yesterday's ways of using omnipotence subtracted from obedience to God. Ignoring that those modes will never arise again. While we forget that right us today, are the ones to use the same principle of action: *"Omnipotence without obedience."* We fight for the six million deaths of the Holocaust. Omnipotence without obedience. We justify a billion abortions in the name of the same principle: *"Omnipotence without obedience."* We fight the omnipotence of yesterday, we justify the omnipotence of today.

*A leper came to him (and kneeling down) begged him and said, "If you wish, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand, touched him, and said to him, "I do will it. Be made clean." The leprosy left him immediately, and he was made clean. Then, warning him sternly, he dismissed him at once. Then he said to him, "See that you tell no one anything, but go, show yourself to the priest and offer for your cleansing what Moses prescribed; that will be proof for them." The man went away and began to publicize the whole matter. He spread the report abroad so that it was impossible for Jesus to enter a town openly. He remained outside in deserted places, and people kept coming to him from everywhere.*

The leper does not want Jesus to dodge the holy use of his omnipotence and asks with humility and delicacy. But Jesus also asks him to see healing as an answer to a request of prayer and for this reason invites him not to divulge the fulfilled healing. The purified leper must keep the thing concealed to himself, because if tomorrow the Father will tell him not to purify any other leper, he will have to obey. Those who come, will not come with the same humility. They will not be willing to accept a rejection and then his mission could receive a damage instead of a good. For this reason, everything will have to remain in the utmost concealment. The command of Jesus remained unheard. As soon as he left Jesus, that man began to proclaim and divulge the fact. What were the results? Jesus could no longer enter publicly in a city. Even if he remained in isolated places, they came to him from everywhere. The Holy Spirit always manifested him new ways for new situations.

Even for every missionary of Jesus the same theological and moral question arises. He is sent into the world full of the Holy Spirit with the powers that Christ the Lord has given him. Can he use the Holy Spirit and the powers of Jesus from his will or is he always obliged to submit them to the will of the Father? Power for power is idolatry. Power always submitted to obedience to God is redemption and salvation. Christ Jesus, omnipotent by nature and Divine Person, has always submitted his power to the divine will of the Father. Although he was always tempted by Satan and men so that he used it from his will, he never fell into temptation. He is from the Father.

Virgin Mary, Mother of Redemption, Angels and Saints make us from the will of God.

## AUTHORITY TO FORGIVE SINS ON EARTH

## 1Sam 8,4-7.10-22a; Ps 88; Mk 2,1-12

### 12 JANUARY

In Ancient Scripture forgiveness is life, the true life of every man and in a very special way for every child of Abraham. A people can only stand on forgiveness. This is why revenge must be cancelled forever. It is not worthy of man.

*The vengeful will suffer the Lord’s vengeance, for he remembers their sins in detail. Forgive your neighbour’s injustice; then when you pray, your own sins will be forgiven. Should a man nourish anger against his fellows and expect healing from the Lord? Should a man refuse mercy to his fellows, yet seek pardon for his own sins? If he who is but flesh cherishes wrath, who will forgive his sins? Remember your last days, set enmity aside; remember death and decay, and cease from sin! Think of the commandments, hate not your neighbour; of the Most High's covenant, and overlook faults (Sir 28,1-7).*

Jesus is careful not to say: *"I forgive your sins"*. He could have said it, but he did not say it, because otherwise he would have been stoned in the same house. His is a pure preaching of forgiveness on the part of the Lord. It is as if he were saying to the paralytic: *"Son, the Lord has forgiven you all sins"*. This is a true prophetic mission. The prophet reveals the people their sins, but also proclaims forgiveness from the Lord. David has sinned. He must be stoned. Nathan announces him the forgiveness of his God.

*The Lord sent Nathan to David, and when he came to him, he said: "Judge this case for me! In a certain town there were two men, one rich, the other poor. The rich man had flocks and herds in great numbers. But the poor man had nothing at all except one little ewe lamb that he had bought. He nourished her, and she grew up with him and his children. She shared the little food he had and drank from his cup and slept in his bosom. She was like a daughter to him. Now, the rich man received a visitor, but he would not take from his own flocks and herds to prepare a meal for the wayfarer who had come to him. Instead he took the poor man's ewe lamb and made a meal of it for his visitor." David grew very angry with that man and said to Nathan: "As the Lord lives, the man who has done this merits death! He shall restore the ewe lamb fourfold because he has done this and has had no pity." Then Nathan said to David: "You are the man! Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." Nathan answered David: "The Lord on his part has forgiven your sin: you shall not die. But since you have utterly spurned the Lord by this deed, the child born to you must surely die" (Cf. 2Sam 12,1-14).*

The scribes present think in their hearts: "*Why does he speak like this? He blasphemies! Who can forgive sins, if not God alone?"*. From the announcement of forgiveness, Jesus now reveals that He has the power to forgive sins, just as He has the power to heal the paralytic: *"So that you may know that the Son of Man has the power to forgive sins on earth, I say to you - he told the paralytic - get up, take your stretcher and go to your house."* The history of salvation changes totally. Man is given the power to forgive sins.

*When Jesus returned to Capernaum after some days, it became known that he was at home. Many gathered together so that there was no longer room for them, not even around the door, and he preached the word to them. They came bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. Unable to get near Jesus because of the crowd, they opened up the roof above him. After they had broken through, they let down the mat on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Child, your sins are forgiven." Now some of the scribes were sitting there asking themselves, "Why does this man speak that way? He is blaspheming. Who but God alone can forgive sins?" Jesus immediately knew in his mind what they were thinking to themselves, so he said, "Why are you thinking such things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, pick up your mat and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth" -  he said to the paralytic, "I say to you, rise, pick up your mat, and go home." He rose, picked up his mat at once, and went away in the sight of everyone. They were all astounded and glorified God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this."*

The wonder of all is great and turns into praise to God. Never before has such a thing been heard. Never before had a man received the power to forgive sins.

Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, Angels and Saints make us of true faith in God.

## AND HE GOT UP AND FOLLOWED HIM

## 1 Sam 9,1-4.17-19; 10,1a; Ps 20; Mk 2,13-17

### 13 JANUARY

Jesus passes and sees Levi, Alfeo's son, sitting at the tax desk and calls him not with a long persuasion dialogue, with a high and profound revelation, but with one word: *"Follow me."* Levi immediately leaves the tax desk and follows him. As the Word of the Father calls to life things that are not, so is the Word of Jesus. Levi for the people of the Jews is a publican, that is, a public sinner, one who was sold to the Romans, betraying and denying his people, his flesh and his blood. He has passed from being with God to not being. Jesus passes, sees him and calls him from the not being to being. Not only that. He constitutes him his own Apostle. He makes him a person that tomorrow will have to go throughout the world to call on being with God, in Christ the Lord, those who are in being without God. His is a divine mission.

Seeing Levi who goes from non-being to being, from death to life, from contempt to honour, many publicans and sinners go to his home and sit at table with Jesus. They too can pass from non-being to being. Jesus can open the doors of hope and life for them too. They will not be forever the rejected, the despised, the perverted, the waste and the garbage of the Lord's people. A single gesture of Christ the Lord changes the history of humanity and turns it upside down. Just as the Father with a Word had called to existence everything that did not exist before. This is the power of the Word of Jesus. It is the creator of new history, true hope and holy light. This is what publicans and sinners understand and for this reason they are going to Jesus. They too want to live Levi's experience. They too might be called to life by Jesus Christ. The creative power of his Word might be manifested for them too. A simple gesture with great fruits. If only the Christian believed in the Word!

*Once again he went out along the sea. All the crowd came to him and he taught them. As he passed by, he saw Levi, son of Alphaeus, sitting at the customs post. He said to him, "Follow me." And he got up and followed him. While he was at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners sat with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many who followed him. Some scribes who were Pharisees saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors and said to his disciples, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" Jesus heard this and said to them (that), "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners. "*

Jesus sees and operates from the eternal light of his Father. Instead, Scribes and Pharisees speak from the darkness of their heart. They do not see the new creation operated in Levi, nor the desire for a new life in the publicans and sinners that have come and sat at table with Jesus. That is why they murmur and accuse Jesus of eating and drinking with publicans and sinners. Not seeing, they do not know that those people who were sitting at table once were such and today they no longer are. This error was also made with Zacchaeus. First, this was a publican. After the call of Jesus he had been created a new man by the Word. Pharisees and scribes do not see with the eyes of the Spirit, but only from the darkness of their mind. Jesus does not enlighten them on the mystery of the new creation and transition from death to life. They would not have understand.

He announce them a truth that is daily action among men. A doctor does not go to the health people. They do not need a doctor. Instead, he goes where there is a sick person. Those who do not feel well and want to recover their health will necessarily need a doctor. Jesus is the medicine against every sin sickness. Where will he have to go, to whoever feels well or whoever feels bad? He chose to go to who feels bad. He has a mandate to respect: *"I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."* He is the physician of spirit and soul. If he does not take care of sinners, helping them to return to justice, what is the use of his mission? This truth applies to the Church. If she only takes care of the body of man, but not the spirit and not the soul, her mission is vain. Everybody can cure a body. She alone can cure soul and spirit. It's her mission.

Virgin Mary, Mother of Redemption, Angels and Saints, give us our true mission.

## AND THEY STAYED WITH HIM THAT DAY

## 1Sam 3,3b-10.19; Ps 39; 1Cor 6,13e-15a.17-20; Jn 1,35-42

### 14 JANUARY – II SUNDAY O.T. – B

We can employ an image used by navigation to understand who Christ Jesus is. He is the polar star to be reached. The compass must orient the life of every man towards that direction. This is why Jesus must always be before our eyes. That is how this truth is lived by Paul, this way also announced by the Letter to the Hebrews. Whoever does not direct his life towards Christ, is miserably lost.

*Although I myself have grounds for confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he can be confident in flesh, all the more can I. Circumcised on the eighth day, of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrew parentage, in observance of the law a Pharisee, in zeal I persecuted the church, in righteousness based on the law I was blameless. (But) whatever gains I had, these I have come to consider a loss because of Christ. More than that, I even consider everything as a loss because of the supreme good of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have accepted the loss of all things and I consider them so much rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having any righteousness of my own based on the law but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God, depending on faith to know him and the power of his resurrection and (the) sharing of his sufferings by being conformed to his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. It is not that I have already taken hold of it or have already attained perfect maturity, but I continue my pursuit in hope that I may possess it, since I have indeed been taken possession of by Christ (Jesus). Brothers, I for my part do not consider myself to have taken possession. Just one thing: forgetting what lies behind but straining forward to what lies ahead, I continue my pursuit toward the goal, the prize of God's upward calling, in Christ Jesus (Phil 3,4-14).*

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden and sin that clings to us and persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith. For the sake of the joy that lay before him he endured the cross, despising its shame, and has taken his seat at the right of the throne of God. Consider how he endured such opposition from sinners, in order that you may not grow weary and lose heart. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood (Heb 12,1-4).*

John the Baptist looks towards Christ and announces him with new words: *"Behold the Lamb of God!"*. Immediately two of his disciples follow him. They go behind him. They remain with Jesus a whole day. Andrew announces Christ to his brother, Simon Peter, leading him to him, so that he may have science, knowledge and direct experience. Christ is already the polar star of John the Baptist, Andrew, the other disciple and Peter. These last three will be disciples of Jesus, sent by Him tomorrow to the world to proclaim Him and also to bring every person to Him, making him his body.

*The next day John was there again with two of his disciples, and as he watched Jesus walk by, he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God." The two disciples heard what he said and followed Jesus. Jesus turned and saw them following him and said to them, "What are you looking for?" They said to him, "Rabbi" (which translated means Teacher), "where are you staying?" He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they went and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. It was about four in the afternoon. Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was one of the two who heard John and followed Jesus. He first found his own brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated Anointed). Then he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you will be called Kephas" (which is translated Peter).*

The mystery of salvation is an uninterrupted path towards Christ Jesus. We walk in Him, we walk with Him and we walk through Him, to bring every man to Him. Walking in Him and bringing to Him, in the *"chariot"* of His body, as his body, he must be reached in the perfection of his light and then with death be in his eternal light in the blessed skies. If Christ is everything for us, can we think of an evangelization or a mission of the Church in which Christ must not be reached or that the missionary may not be in him to bring every other man to Him? Whoever is not in Christ and does not lead to him, to form his body, consumes his energies in vain.

Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, Angels and Saints make us one with Christ.

## WINE IS POURED INTO FRESH WINESKINS

## 1Sam 15,16-23; Ps 49; Mk 2,18-22

### 15 JANUARY

The prophet Isaiah had already announced to the people what was fasting beloved by God: the full observance of his commandments, including the whole Code of Holiness. Living all the Law of the Covenant and that of the imitation of God's holiness is all for man. There is no need to add anything else. To the Law of God which is perfect, nothing is added and nothing is taken away. The Lord has always asked obedience to his Word.

*Lo, on your fast day you carry out your own pursuits, and drive all your labourers. Yes, your fast ends in quarrelling and fighting, striking with wicked claw. Would that today you might fast so as to make your voice heard on high! Is this the manner of fasting I wish, of keeping a day of penance: That a man bow his head like a reed, and lie in sackcloth and ashes? Do you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? This, rather, is the fasting that I wish: releasing those bound unjustly, untying the thongs of the yoke; Setting free the oppressed, breaking every yoke; Sharing your bread with the hungry, sheltering the oppressed and the homeless; Clothing the naked when you see them, and not turning your back on your own. Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your wound shall quickly be healed; Your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer, you shall cry for help, and he will say: Here I am!*

*If you remove from your midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech; If you bestow your bread on the hungry and satisfy the afflicted; Then light shall rise for you in the darkness, and the gloom shall become for you like midday; Then the Lord will guide you always and give you plenty even on the parched land. He will renew your strength, and you shall be like a watered garden, like a spring whose water never fails. The ancient ruins shall be rebuilt for your sake, and the foundations from ages past you shall raise up; "Repairer of the breach," they shall call you, "Restorer of ruined homesteads." If you hold back your foot on the Sabbath from following your own pursuits on my holy day; If you call the Sabbath a delight, and the LORD'S holy day honourable; If you honour it by not following your ways, seeking your own interests, or speaking with malice - Then you shall delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth; I will nourish you with the heritage of Jacob, your father, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken (Is 58,1-14).*

If the Old Covenant cannot already be contained in the old skin of fasting, might the New Covenant, which is Crucified Christ, who asks us to be crucified in Him for the redemption of humanity, be contained and manifested by such an old skin? The new wine skin of the New Covenant is the Holy Spirit. One becomes the body of Christ, one is poured into the ever new skin of the Holy Spirit, he reaches always contained in him, perfect conformation to Christ Crucified, in a journey that must never be interrupted. No human wine skin and not just fasting might contain Christ Crucified and the Christian crucified in him for the redemption of his brothers. Only the Holy Spirit might hold him. Only the Spirit of the Lord might bring the Christian up to the crucifixion.

*The disciples of John and of the Pharisees were accustomed to fast. People came to him and objected, "Why do the disciples of John and the disciples of the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" Jesus answered them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast on that day. No one sews a piece of unshrunken cloth on an old cloak. If he does, its fullness pulls away, the new from the old, and the tear gets worse. Likewise, no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the skins are ruined. Rather, new wine is poured into fresh wineskins."*

It is right then that everyone asks: *"Am I poured into the old skin or the new skin?".* But also: *"Am I a builder of human wineskins, or am I poured into the skin of the Holy Spirit and do I point to the Spirit as the one and only wineskin in which every Christian must be poured if he wants to reach Christ in his crucifixion to enjoy tomorrow his glory in the eternal heaven?"* These are questions that need to be answered. Jesus is divinely wise. He leave in the old wine skins those who want to stay in them. However, he points out that there is a new wineskin in which the new wine that is his Mystery has to be poured. If we cannot always reveal the whole truth, it must always be announced.

Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, Angels and Saints pour us into the wineskin of the Spirit.

## WHEN ABIATHAR WAS HIGH PRIEST

## 1Sam 16,1-13; Ps 88; Mk 2,23-28

### 16 JANUARY

Jesus wants that the Law of his Father - when it is not a question of the Commandments to the negative that always oblige without any exception - is lived with supreme wisdom, profound intelligence, great charity and infinite mercy. Today he asks not to judge his disciples, who, driven by hunger, collect some spikes on the Sabbath and rubbing them with their hands, they extract from them the grains of wheat to feed on. As an example of application rich with mercy of the law, he refers to the priest Abiatàr, or Achimèlec according to the ancient text.

David flees from Saul because the latter is determined to kill him. After a few days of walking he arrives at the priest Achimelec. He and his are hungry. The priest, having nothing to give them, took the breads of the offering, reserved exclusively for priests, and he offered them so that they satisfied their hunger. In dire straits, he breaks the law of the Lord and gives the holy bread to the hungry. Wise, knowing and intelligent interpretation of the Law. We know that he then paid with his life this gesture of mercy and mercy towards David fleeing from Saul.

*David went to Ahimelech, the priest of Nob, who came trembling to meet him and asked, "Why are you alone? Is there no one with you?" David answered the priest: "The king gave me a commission and told me to let no one know anything about the business on which he sent me or the commission he gave me. For that reason I have arranged a meeting place with my men. Now what have you on hand? Give me five loaves, or whatever you can find." But the priest replied to David, "I have no ordinary bread on hand, only holy bread; if the men have abstained from women, you may eat some of that." David answered the priest: "We have indeed been segregated from women as on previous occasions. Whenever I go on a journey, all the young men are consecrated - even for a secular journey. All the more so today, when they are consecrated at arms!" So the priest gave him holy bread, for no other bread was on hand except the showbread which had been removed from the Lord’s presence and replaced by fresh bread when it was taken away. One of Saul's servants was there that day, detained before the Lord; his name was Doeg the Edomite, and he was Saul's chief henchman. David then asked Ahimelech: "Do you have a spear or a sword on hand? I brought along neither my sword nor my weapons, because the king's business was urgent." The priest replied: "The sword of Goliath the Philistine, whom you killed in the Vale of the Terebinth, is here (wrapped in a mantle) behind an ephod. If you wish to take that, take it; there is no sword here except that one." David said: "There is none to match it. Give it to me!" (1Sam 21,2-10).*

It is right to reiterate it once again. This wise and intelligent interpretation is possible for all the positive Commandments. For the eight that are negative this interpretation might never be given. However, there is an exception made by the same author of the Law. In the case of hunger, you can take enough from the fields to feed yourself, but you cannot take anything out of them with bags, baskets or other utensils.

*When you go through your neighbour’s vineyard, you may eat as many of his grapes as you wish, but do not put them in your basket. When you go through your neighbour’s grain field, you may pluck some of the ears with your hand, but do not put a sickle to your neighbour’s grain (Dt 23,15-26).*

Today we has gone to the opposite excess. We also want to interpret the Commandments to the negative, especially the Sixth, according to a subjective and no longer objective rule. In this way, tomorrow, all the other Commandments will also be reduced subjective. It will be the end.

*As he was passing through a field of grain on the Sabbath, his disciples began to make a path while picking the heads of grain. At this the Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?" He said to them, "Have you never read what David did when he was in need and he and his companions were hungry? How he went into the house of God when Abiathar was high priest and ate the bread of offering that only the priests could lawfully eat, and shared it with his companions?" Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. That is why the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."*

Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, Angels and Saints make us wise in the Law of God.

**TOOK COUNSEL AGAINST HIM**

## 1Sam 17,32-33.37.40-51; Ps 143; Mk 3,1-6

### 17 JANUARY

All of his public life was lived by Jesus as a condemned to death. This condemnation

was already issued at the beginning of his preaching in the synagogue of Nazareth.

*He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went according to his custom into the synagogue on the Sabbath day. He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring glad tidings to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord." Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him. He said to them, "Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They also asked, "Isn't this the son of Joseph?" He said to them, "Surely you will quote me this proverb, 'Physician, cure yourself,' and say, 'Do here in your native place the things that we heard were done in Capernaum.'" And he said, "Amen, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own native place. Indeed, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when the sky was closed for three and a half years and a severe famine spread over the entire land. It was to none of these that Elijah was sent, but only to a widow in Zarephath in the land of Sidon. Again, there were many lepers in Israel during the time of Elisha the prophet; yet not one of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." When the people in the synagogue heard this, they were all filled with fury. They rose up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town had been built, to hurl him down headlong. But he passed through the midst of them and went away (Lk 4,16-30).*

A sentences postponed, but not repealed. Every question of scribes, Pharisees and chief priests to Jesus had this one and only intent: finding something not perfectly suited to the Law in order to have what to accuse, condemn and stone him of. This time it is Jesus who asks them for discernment: *"Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or harm, save a life or kill it?"* But they keep silent. They give no answer. The others in their heart know that the good must also be done on a Sabbath. The Pharisees do not have the courage to stand against the people. They would have been discredited. They act as Pharisees and as people of the occult. They go out with the Herodians and hold counsel against Jesus to make him die. This is the second death sentence on Christ Jesus. From this moment on their every question is a trap. The Holy Spirit will have to suggest even the smallest words to Christ the Lord. One even not wrong, but out of place word and the stones are already prepared for stoning. A difficult life that of Jesus!

*Again he entered the synagogue. There was a man there who had a withered hand. They watched him closely to see if he would cure him on the Sabbath so that they might accuse him. He said to the man with the withered hand, "Come up here before us." Then he said to them, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath rather than to do evil, to save life rather than to destroy it?" But they remained silent. Looking around at them with anger and grieved at their hardness of heart, he said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately took counsel with the Herodians against him to put him to death.*

The last council that decided Jesus' death was the one held by Caiaphas immediately after the resurrection of Lazarus. By now for Jesus the days are numbered. His death is certain. He will only have to prepare all so that everything happens according to the prophecies.

*So the chief priests and the Pharisees convened the Sanhedrin and said, "What are we going to do? This man is performing many signs. If we leave him alone, all will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our land and our nation." But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing, nor do you consider that it is better for you that one man should die instead of the people, so that the whole nation may not perish." He did not say this on his own, but since he was high priest for that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not only for the nation, but also to gather into one the dispersed children of God. So from that day on they planned to kill him (Jn 11,47-53).*

Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, Angels and Saints, support us in the hour of trial.

## A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE (FOLLOWED)

## 1Sam 18,6-9; 19,1-7; Ps 55; Mk 3,7-12

### 18 JANUARY

Jesus is a person that attracts crowds to himself. Not only for the works he did, that is the miracles, but also many came to hear the Word of God. Jesus' method was perfect: he gave word and signs together, sometimes the signs first and then the word, other times the word first and then the signs. Even his word was a powerful force of attraction.

*He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people. His fame spread to all of Syria, and they brought to him all who were sick with various diseases and racked with pain, those who were possessed, lunatics, and paralytics, and he cured them. And great crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan followed him (Mt 4,23-25).*

*Jesus went around to all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness. At the sight of the crowds, his heart was moved with pity for them because they were troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is abundant but the labourers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out labourers for his harvest" (Mt 9,35-38).*

Jesus does not want us to go to him only for the body, for bread, for miracle and for healing. He wants us to go to listen to a word of eternal life, to which to be converted, remaining faithful to it every day, without ever failing in it. This truth is cried out by him with the strength of the Holy Spirit to the cities that had not been converted, despite all the miracles performed in them. It is a severe warning to everyone.

*Then he began to reproach the towns where most of his mighty deeds had been done, since they had not repented. "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty deeds done in your midst had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. And as for you, Capernaum: 'Will you be exalted to heaven? You will go down to the netherworld.' For if the mighty deeds done in your midst had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment than for you" (Mt 11,20-24).*

Jesus sees an imminent danger: the crushing by the crowd. Everyone throws himself on him to touch him. Only physical contact was enough to work the miracle. This is why he asks that a boat be made available to him. He would have got on and talked from the water to those on the beach. Even the impure spirits are an obstacle to his mission. They reveal his identity: *"You are the Son of God!"*, that is, his Christ, his Messiah. Since this news must be hidden from the crowd, he strictly requires them not to reveal to anyone his true identity.

*Jesus withdrew toward the sea with his disciples. A large number of people (followed) from Galilee and from Judea. Hearing what he was doing, a large number of people came to him also from Jerusalem, from Idumea, from beyond the Jordan, and from the neighbourhood of Tyre and Sidon. He told his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, so that they would not crush him. He had cured many and, as a result, those who had diseases were pressing upon him to touch him. And whenever unclean spirits saw him they would fall down before him and shout, "You are the Son of God." He warned them sternly not to make him known.*

What is the great teaching to be drawn from this episode of the Gospel? Christ is in God, he manifests God and attracts to God. Not only for the miracles He does, but also for the words he says. They open the hearts to hope. Every word of Jesus is a door that opens on the certainty of forgiveness, of mercy and of true salvation. Today, Jesus teaches his disciples that tomorrow they will have to be powerful both in words and in deeds. Each of their Words must create true hope in spirit and soul. Their works will have to give relief to afflicted and suffering bodies. However, each according to the ministry, the charisma and the personal vocation. Everyone must carry out the ministry according to the personal motion of the Holy Spirit.

Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, Angels and Saints, make us imitators of Christ Jesus.

## THEY CAME TO HIM

## Mk 3,13-19

### 19 JANUARY

The Evangelist Mark reveals on the call of the Twelve, news deserving an answer: *“Jesus summoned those whom he wanted and they came to him. He appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) that they might be with him.”* Why must the Apostle come to Jesus? Saint John offers the answer to us in his First Letter and also in the Acts of the Apostles, both in the first chapter and in the tenth.

*What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we looked upon and touched with our hands concerns the Word of life -  for the life was made visible; we have seen it and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was made visible to us -  what we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; for our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing this so that our joy may be complete. Now this is the message that we have heard from him and proclaim to you: God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say, "We have fellowship with him," while we continue to walk in darkness, we lie and do not act in truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, then we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of his Son Jesus cleanses us from all sin. If we say, "We are without sin," we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we acknowledge our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from every wrongdoing. If we say, "We have not sinned," we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (1Jn 1,1-10).*

*Therefore, it is necessary that one of the men who accompanied us the whole time the Lord Jesus came and went among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day on which he was taken up from us, become with us a witness to his resurrection." (Act 1,21-22).*

*Then Peter proceeded to speak and said, "In truth, I see that God shows no partiality. Rather, in every nation whoever fears him and acts uprightly is acceptable to him. You know the word (that) he sent to the Israelites as he proclaimed peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all, what has happened all over Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached, how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all those oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. We are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and (in) Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree. This man God raised (on) the third day and granted that he be visible, not to all the people, but to us, the witnesses chosen by God in advance, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. He commissioned us to preach to the people and testify that he is the one appointed by God as judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness, that everyone who believes in him will receive forgiveness of sins through his name." (Act 10,34-43).*

The Apostles must come to Christ because they must know everything about Him, even the simplest words, even apparently meaningless gestures. They will not go into the world to preach the Gospel, but to show every man how the Gospel must be lived. They must reveal to people how Christ Jesus lived, has lived the Gospel. This is why it is righteous, rather necessary, to stay with Him.

*He went up the mountain and summoned those whom he wanted and they came to him. He appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) that they might be with him and he might send them forth to preach and to have authority to drive out demons: (he appointed the twelve:) Simon, whom he named Peter; James, son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James, whom he named Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder; Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus; Thaddeus, Simon the Cananean, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.*

Now let us ask: do we, who are disciples of Jesus, show the world how Jesus lived the Gospel? Do we have teachers who show us Jesus’s life in the daily life, lived in the fullness of the Holy Spirit today? If the world does not see how Jesus has lived the Gospel, one will hardly be converted. The vision is the way of faith.

Virgin Mary, Mother of Redemption, Angels, Saints, make us true evangelic model.

## FOR THEY SAID, "HE IS OUT OF HIS MIND."

## 2Sam 1,1-4.11-12.19.23-27; Ps 79; Mk 3,20-21

### 20 JANUARY

Why Jesus is said by his own to be: "Out of himself", that is, crazy. The most beautiful comment on this episode of the Gospel I think it can be drawn from the testimony given to Jesus the Lord by Paul to King Agrippa. After having listened, the king called him *"Crazy!"*

*Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You may now speak on your own behalf." So Paul stretched out his hand and began his defence. "I count myself fortunate, King Agrippa, that I am to defend myself before you today against all the charges made against me by the Jews, especially since you are an expert in all the Jewish customs and controversies. And therefore I beg you to listen patiently. My manner of living from my youth, a life spent from the beginning among my people and in Jerusalem, all (the) Jews know. They have known about me from the start, if they are willing to testify, that I have lived my life as a Pharisee, the strictest party of our religion. But now I am standing trial because of my hope in the promise made by God to our ancestors. Our twelve tribes hope to attain to that promise as they fervently worship God day and night; and on account of this hope I am accused by Jews, O king. Why is it thought unbelievable among you that God raises the dead? I myself once thought that I had to do many things against the name of Jesus the Nazorean, and I did so in Jerusalem. I imprisoned many of the holy ones with the authorization I received from the chief priests, and when they were to be put to death I cast my vote against them. Many times, in synagogue after synagogue, I punished them in an attempt to force them to blaspheme; I was so enraged against them that I pursued them even to foreign cities.*

*"On one such occasion I was travelling to Damascus with the authorization and commission of the chief priests. At midday, along the way, O king, I saw a light from the sky, brighter than the sun, shining around me and my travelling companions. We all fell to the ground and I heard a voice saying to me in Hebrew, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goad.' And I said, 'Who are you, sir?' And the Lord replied, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. Get up now, and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness of what you have seen (of me) and what you will be shown. I shall deliver you from this people and from the Gentiles to whom I send you, to open their eyes that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may obtain forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been consecrated by faith in me.' "And so, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. On the contrary, first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem and throughout the whole country of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, I preached the need to repent and turn to God, and to do works giving evidence of repentance. That is why the Jews seized me (when I was) in the temple and tried to kill me. But I have enjoyed God's help to this very day, and so I stand here testifying to small and great alike, saying nothing different from what the prophets and Moses foretold, that the Messiah must suffer and that, as the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles."*

*While Paul was so speaking in his defence, Festus said in a loud voice, "You are mad, Paul; much learning is driving you mad." But Paul replied, "I am not mad, most excellent Festus; I am speaking words of truth and reason. The king knows about these matters and to him I speak boldly, for I cannot believe that (any) of this has escaped his notice; this was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you believe." Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You will soon persuade me to play the Christian." Paul replied, "I would pray to God that sooner or later not only you but all who listen to me today might become as I am except for these chains" (At 26,1-29).*

Again in the Second Letter to the Corinthians, Paul uses by applying it to him this word: *"crazy"*. But is not today whoever preaches the Gospel in its entirety said to be: "Out of himself?".

*I repeat, no one should consider me foolish; but if you do, accept me as a fool, so that I too may boast a little (2Cor 11, 16). I have been foolish. You compelled me, for I ought to have been commended by you. For I am in no way inferior to these "superapostles," even though I am nothing (2Cor 12, 11).*

Always for the world, those who preach the truth of the Gospel become *"crazy, outside of themselves"*.

*He came home. Again (the) crowd gathered, making it impossible for them even to eat. When his relatives heard of this they set out to seize him, for they said, "He is out of his mind."*

Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, Angels and Saints make us crazy for the Gospel.

**JANUARY 2018**

## THIRD DECADE OF JANUARY

## PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL OF GOD

## Jo 3,1-5.10; Ps 24; 1 Cor 7,29-31; Mk 1,14-20

### 21 JANUARY – III SUNDAY O.T. – B

It is easy to replace the Gospel of God with a gospel of men. In Corinth they came also to the point of denying the resurrection of Christ the Lord. Either the Gospel is kept just as the Apostles have announced it, or our faith rests on the sand.

*Now I am reminding you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you indeed received and in which you also stand. Through it you are also being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I handed on to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures; that he was buried; that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures; that he appeared to Kephas, then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. After that he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one born abnormally, he appeared to me. For I am the least of the apostles, not fit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me has not been ineffective. Indeed, I have toiled harder than all of them; not I, however, but the grace of God (that is) with me. Therefore, whether it be I or they, so we preach and so you believed. But if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then neither has Christ been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then empty (too) is our preaching; empty, too, your faith. Then we are also false witnesses to God, because we testified against God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised, and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is vain; you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all (1Cor 15.1-19).*

Even the Galatians without wasting time pass from the Gospel announced by Paul to one of their gospels, in which the mystery of Christ the Lord was almost shelved.

*I am amazed that you are so quickly forsaking the one who called you by (the) grace (of Christ) for a different gospel (not that there is another). But there are some who are disturbing you and wish to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach (to you) a gospel other than the one that we preached to you, let that one be accursed! As we have said before, and now I say again, if anyone preaches to you a gospel other than the one that you received, let that one be accursed! Am I now currying favour with human beings or God? Or am I seeking to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a slave of Christ. Now I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel preached by me is not of human origin. For I did not receive it from a human being, nor was I taught it, but it came through a revelation of Jesus Christ. For you heard of my former way of life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it, and progressed in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my race, since I was even more a zealot for my ancestral traditions. But when (God), who from my mother's womb had set me apart and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him to the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult flesh and blood (Gal 1,6-17).*

The Evangelist Mark, revealing that Jesus preached the Gospel of God, reassures Christians. In Jesus there is no betrayal of the will of God and of his mystery of salvation.

*After John had been arrested, Jesus came to Galilee proclaiming the gospel of God: "This is the time of fulfilment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel." As he passed by the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting their nets into the sea; they were fishermen. Jesus said to them, "Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men." Then they abandoned their nets and followed him. He walked along a little farther and saw James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They too were in a boat mending their nets. Then he called them. So they left their father Zebedee in the boat along with the hired men and followed him.*

Today, it is right that we ask ourselves: is the Gospel we preach and in which we say to believe, the gospel of Christ Jesus, the Gospel of God? Are the Commandments, the Speech of the Mountain, eternal perdition, God's Gospel or must they be deleted from it?

Virgin Mary, Mother of Redemption, Angels and Saints, give us the pure Gospel of Christ.

## HOW CAN SATAN DRIVE OUT SATAN?

## 2Sam 5,1-7.10; Ps 88; Mk 3,22-30

### 22 JANUARY

That the Pharisees do not know Satan is attested by their affirmations. They do not know God according to truth, they do not even know Satan according to truth. Lies are their heart and falsehood are the words from their mouth. From Scripture we know the putting to flight of only one devil. But not for the work of men, but of the Archangel Raphael helped by the faith of Tobiah in his every word. Tobiah believes and Raphael removes the devil from his home. His life is saved. By faith and supernatural action.

*Then she stopped weeping. When the boy left home, accompanied by the angel, the dog followed Tobiah out of the house and went with them. The travellers walked till nightfall, and made camp beside the Tigris River. Now when the boy went down to wash his feet in the river, a large fish suddenly leaped out of the water and tried to swallow his foot. He shouted in alarm. But the angel said to him, "Take hold of the fish and don't let it get away!" The boy seized the fish and hauled it up on the shore. The angel then told him: "Cut the fish open and take out its gall, heart, and liver, and keep them with you; but throw away the entrails. Its gall, heart, and liver make useful medicines." After the lad had cut the fish open, he put aside the gall, heart, and liver. Then he broiled and ate part of the fish; the rest he salted and kept for the journey. Afterward they travelled on together till they were near Media. The boy asked the angel this question: "Brother Azariah, what medicinal value is there in the fish's heart, liver, and gall?" He answered: "As regards the fish's heart and liver, if you burn them so that the smoke surrounds a man or a woman who is afflicted by a demon or evil spirit, the affliction will leave him completely, and no demons will ever return to him again. And as for the gall, if you rub it on the eyes of a man who has cataracts, blowing into his eyes right on the cataracts, his sight will be restored" (Tb 6,1-9).*

*When they had finished eating and drinking, the girl's parents wanted to retire. They brought the young man out of the dining room and led him into the bedroom. At this point Tobiah, mindful of Raphael's instructions, took the fish's liver and heart from the bag which he had with him, and placed them on the embers for the incense. The demon, repelled by the odour of the fish, fled into Upper Egypt; Raphael pursued him there and bound him hand and foot (Tb 8,1-3).*

It is truth. Satan does not obey any creature. He does not even obey the good Angels, unless the latter have not been appointed by God, just as happened with Raphael. The Pharisees should have known it. All the sons of Adam are under his power. In fact, Jesus came to free them from this slavery, making them his body and his life, for the faith. Until one does not become the body of Christ, living as the body of Christ, in full obedience to his Word, to his Gospel, one is always prey to Satan. If one is not physically possessed by him, he is it in thoughts, in will, in desires, in the mind and in the heart. With the vice the body is also under his rule. Only God can free us from Satan and Christ can do it because all the power of the Holy Spirit acts in him, as a true man, and as the true God he is also omnipotent.

*The scribes who had come from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul," and "By the prince of demons he drives out demons." Summoning them, he began to speak to them in parables, "How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand; that is the end of him. But no one can enter a strong man's house to plunder his property unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can plunder his house. Amen, I say to you, all sins and all blasphemies that people utter will be forgiven them. But whoever blasphemes against the holy Spirit will never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an everlasting sin." For they had said, "He has an unclean spirit."*

Why do the Pharisees say that Jesus drives out demons by virtue of their prince? To destroy his credibility before the people, almost always kneaded with a lot of superstition. Presenting God as an ally of Satan is monstrous not only for the absence of theology, but also for sound moral principles. The former sin is for false testimony. The latter, because it is aimed at destroying Jesus, it is against the Holy Spirit. This last sin will never be forgiven, either on earth or in the eternal skies.

Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, Angels and Saints, free us from any falsehood.

## WHO ARE MY MOTHER AND MY BROTHERS?

## Mk 3,31-35

### 23 JANUARY

The Gospel according to Mark, lacking the initial chapters on the childhood, as it differently happens in the Gospel according to Matthew and also according to Luke, each of them dedicating the first two chapters, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to enter into possession of the utmost truth of the mystery and of the mission of the Mother of God. But also in Matthew and in Luke, then, it is as if the Virgin Mary were lost, apart from appearing in the circumstance in which it is said that She and the brothers, namely, her relatives, desired to see Jesus. We also find the Mother of Jessus once in the Acts of the Apostles, with the community in prayer, waiting for the Holy Spirit.

The one who gives complete truth to the Mother of Jesus is John. With the narration of the wedding in Cana, he puts Her at the centre of the mystery of salvation. She sees what is lacking and She knows how to do it. She asks her Son to come to her rescue and She asks the servants to put themselves at the disposal of Jesus. Through her mission as Mother, heaven and earth are put into movement, the miracle is performed, faith arises in the heart of the disciples. It is as if She were the “director” of the history. Everyone is invited to live his part: God, Christ, the servants, the bridegroom, the disciples. If the Virgin Mary had not intervened, it would have been a sad, miserable wedding, with no joy, but also with no faith in Jesus the Lord.

*On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. When the wine ran short, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." (And) Jesus said to her, "Woman, how does your concern affect me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servers, "Do whatever he tells you." Now there were six stone water jars there for Jewish ceremonial washings, each holding twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told them, "Fill the jars with water." So they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Draw some out now and take it to the headwaiter." So they took it. And when the headwaiter tasted the water that had become wine, without knowing where it came from (although the servers who had drawn the water knew), the headwaiter called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves good wine first, and then when people have drunk freely, an inferior one; but you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this as the beginning of his signs*[*7*](https://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0839/__PXA.HTM#$3R5)*in Cana in Galilee and so revealed his glory, and his disciples began to believe in him. (Jn 2,1-11).*

Before the Cross, from the Cross, Jesus gives the mother to the son and the son to the mother. He gives the Woman to John and John to Mary. John takes Mary with him and Mary lets herself be taken. Why this gift? Because in the house of his Church, in the wedding of redemption and of salvation of Jesus with humanity, or with his Church, the Mother carries out the same mission lived in Cana of Galilee, in that wedding. This mission is forever. Personally I believe that even in the Paradise, even if in different ways, the Virgin Mary lives a prominent mission.

*Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary of Magdala. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple there whom he loved, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son." Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home. (Jn 19,25-27).*

Jesus, in saying: *“Who are my mother and (my) brothers?”* and adding, turning his gaze over those were around him: *"Here are my mother and my brothers. (For) whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."*, does not underestimate his utmost and unique privilege of Mother of God, He extends the mystical motherhood and brotherhood to all those who do the will of his Father. Mary is Mother!

*His mother and his brothers arrived. Standing outside they sent word to him and called him. A crowd seated around him told him, "Your mother and your brothers (and your sisters) are outside asking for you." But he said to them in reply, "**Who are my mother and (my) brothers?" And looking around at those seated in the circle he said**, "Here are my mother and my brothers. (For) whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."*

Virgin Mary, Mother of Redemption, Angels and Saints, make us brothers of Jesus, as well.

## HEAR THIS! A SOWER WENT OUT TO SOW

## 2Sam 7,4-17; Ps 88; Mk 4,1-20

### 24 JANUARY

God wants every man to come to the knowledge of the truth. The Truth of God is Christ Jesus. Christ is sown, Christ is known, he is accepted and one becomes truth in Him. That is why Jesus must be sown in every heart. The sower must not exclude any man. He must always give Christ to all. How do you give Christ? Donating His Word. One is converted to the Word, receives baptism and becomes one in Christ. The Word is not given, Christ is not known, he might not be accepted, the will of the Father that wants Christ to be the life of every man and every man to return to life in Him, with Him, for Him, is not fulfilled. Christ and Word are one seed. Christ and the Christian must be a single tree of life. This is the eternal will of the Creator, Lord, Redeemer and Saviour of man. You do not sow Christ, you do not accept Christ, you do not become one with Him, one tree of life, you remain in death.

The Sower's Parable reveals two truths that today more than ever must be put in the heart. The first truth concerns the sower. The Word of Christ and Christ the Word of God must be given to all, always, without any exception. The Gospel has always to be preached entirely to everyone. There is not a single man to whom the Gospel must not be given. This is the mission of every disciple of Jesus. The second truth reveals to us what happens when the Gospel is sown. There are soils that do not produce, but there is also the good soil that gives good fruit. Not all good soils produce the same amount of fruit. The sower does not have to worry about the fruit, but to always spread good seed in every heart. If the Word and Christ are announced, the fruits will certainly come.

*On another occasion he began to teach by the sea. A very large crowd gathered around him so that he got into a boat on the sea and sat down. And the whole crowd was beside the sea on land. And he taught them at length in parables, and in the course of his instruction he said to them, "Hear this! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seed fell on the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on rocky ground where it had little soil. It sprang up at once because the soil was not deep. And when the sun rose, it was scorched and it withered for lack of roots. Some seed fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked it and it produced no grain. And some seed fell on rich soil and produced fruit. It came up and grew and yielded thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold."*

*He added, "Whoever has ears to hear ought to hear." And when he was alone, those present along with the Twelve questioned him about the parables. He answered them, "The mystery of the kingdom of God has been granted to you. But to those outside everything comes in parables, so that 'they may look and see but not perceive, and hear and listen but not understand, in order that they may not be converted and be forgiven.'" Jesus said to them, "Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand any of the parables? The sower sows the word. These are the ones on the path where the word is sown. As soon as they hear, Satan comes at once and takes away the word sown in them. And these are the ones sown on rocky ground who, when they hear the word, receive it at once with joy. But they have no root; they last only for a time. Then when tribulation or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. Those sown among thorns are another sort. They are the people who hear the word, but worldly anxiety, the lure of riches, and the craving for other things intrude and choke the word, and it bears no fruit. But those sown on rich soil are the ones who hear the word and accept it and bear fruit thirty and sixty and a hundredfold."*

As you can see, there are two responsibilities that must be highlighted. The first concerns the seeders of the Word. They must never resign from their mission. Even if tomorrow the world were all "road, or rocks, or thorns," they on the road, among the stones, among the thorns are obliged to sow the good seed of the Word. Their mission does never depend on the reception of the gift. Having given the good seed, the responsibility is entirely of whoever receives it. If the seed is not given, eternal responsibility falls on the missionary of Jesus. It is a truth that must be put in every heart.

Virgin Mary, Mother of Redemption, Angels, Saints, make us sower of the Word.

## PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL TO EVERY CREATURE

## At 22,3-16 or At 9,1-22; Ps 116; Mk 16,15-18

### 25 JANUARY

Preaching the Gospel to every creature is the command that Jesus gives to His Apostles. They are personally and in every successor the people responsible of Christ Jesus and his Word. Everyone else can announce Christ and His Word only if he is in the communion of truth, light and love with their Christ and their Word. As I cannot receive but the Eucharist and the Holy Spirit that the Apostles and Priests give me, who are their collaborators in the Episcopal order, so I cannot receive except the Christ and His Word, that are Christ and the his Word of the Apostles and Priests, that live in hierarchical communion with them. Every Christ and every Word that does not come from the Apostles, in hierarchical communion with Peter, and every Christ and every Word that does not come from the priests, in hierarchical communion with their bishops, is certainly not the Christ of God and not even it is the Word of Jesus the Lord, it is attested by their division and separation from the Body of Christ which is one and one must remain forever.

The Apostles of the Lord and the bishops their successors are obliged with eternal responsibility to obey this divine mandate. They are Apostles, that is sent to the world to carry out only this mission. Jesus did not give them any other command. In this latter missionary mandate they are also freed from any other prior order or statute given to them in the previous mission, in truth formed in the Gospel according to Mark of just two precepts: preaching the Gospel and casting out demons.

*He went up the mountain and summoned those whom he wanted and they came to him. He appointed twelve (whom he also named apostles) that they might be with him and he might send them forth to preach and to have authority to drive out demons: (he appointed the twelve:) Simon, whom he named Peter; James, son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James, whom he named Boanerges, that is, sons of thunder; Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus; Thaddeus, Simon the Cananean, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him (Mk 3,13-19).*

Everything else does not belong strictly to the apostolic mandate. All other things will be done by those who will believe in the Word preached by them. The words of Jesus are clear: *"Whoever believes will be baptized will be saved, but those who will not believe will be condemned. These are the signs that will accompany those who believe: in my name they will cast demons, speak new tongues, will take snakes in their hands, and if they will have some poison, it will not hurt them; they will impose their hands on the sick and they will heal."* The distinction between apostolic mandate and the fruits of true faith is evident, unmistakable. Only the mandate of the Word, the gift of the Gospel, is entrusted to the Apostles. Every other work is lived by those who believe in their Word. It is a non-delegable mandate. They may have a thousand collaborators for the gift of the Word, but always with them, behind them and in communion with them.

*He said to them, "Go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel to every creature. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved; whoever does not believe will be condemned. These signs will accompany those who believe: in my name they will drive out demons, they will speak new languages. They will pick up serpents (with their hands), and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not harm them. They will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."*

As Jesus was tempted to be detached from the Father, so today and always Satan will tempt the Apostles to separate from the mandate of Christ to live according to their thoughts and desires. He will tempt the priests to separate from the Bishops. He will tempt the lay faithful to walk without any communion with their priests. The right communion is of the lay faithful with their priests, of the priests with their bishop and of the bishop with the Pope. Today there is a very subtle division and an invisible separation. The lay faithful skips his priest, the priest skips his bishop, telling the former and the latter that they are from the pope. All of them do not know that hierarchical communion is of the faithful with the priest, of the priest with the bishop and of the bishop with the Pope. Leaping each one's own communion is being placed out of communion.

Virgin Mary, Mother of Redemption, Angels and Saints, make us of real communion.

## APPOINTED SEVENTY (-TWO) OTHERS

## 2Tm 1,1-8 opp. Tt 1,1-5; Ps 95; Lk 10,1-9

### 26 JANUARY

The evangelizing mission cannot be carried out by a few people. The world is immense. This impossibility in the Old Testament was first noted by Iethro, the father-in-law of Moses and then by Moses himself. They provided by adding other men.

*The next day Moses sat in judgment for the people, who waited about him from morning until evening. When his father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he inquired, "What sort of thing is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone while all the people have to stand about you from morning till evening?" Moses answered his father-in-law, "The people come to me to consult God. Whenever they have a disagreement, they come to me to have me settle the matter between them and make known to them God's decisions and regulations." "You are not acting wisely," his father-in-law replied. "You will surely wear yourself out, and not only yourself but also these people with you. The task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. Now, listen to me, and I will give you some advice, that God may be with you. Act as the people's representative before God, bringing to him whatever they have to say. Enlighten them in regard to the decisions and regulations, showing them how they are to live and what they are to do. But you should also look among all the people for able and God-fearing men, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain, and set them as officers over groups of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. Let these men render decisions for the people in all ordinary cases. More important cases they should refer to you, but all the lesser cases they can settle themselves. Thus, your burden will be lightened, since they will bear it with you. If you do this, when God gives you orders you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied" (Ex 18,13-23).*

*"Why do you treat your servant so badly?" Moses asked the Lord. "Why are you so displeased with me that you burden me with all this people? Was it I who conceived all this people? or was it I who gave them birth, that you tell me to carry them at my bosom, like a foster father carrying an infant, to the land you have promised under oath to their fathers? Where can I get meat to give to all this people? For they are crying to me, 'Give us meat for our food.' I cannot carry all this people by myself, for they are too heavy for me. If this is the way you will deal with me, then please do me the favour of killing me at once, so that I need no longer face this distress." Then the Lord said to Moses, "Assemble for me seventy of the elders of Israel, men you know for true elders and authorities among the people, and bring them to the meeting tent. When they are in place beside you, I will come down and speak with you there. I will also take some of the spirit that is on you and will bestow it on them, that they may share the burden of the people with you. You will then not have to bear it by yourself (Num 11,11-17).*

Jesus does not need any man to be enlightened. He is perpetually under the tent of light, wisdom, truth, justice and intelligence of the Holy Spirit. Not only does He add to the Apostles seventy-two disciples, he also commands the Apostles and the disciples to always pray to ask the Master of the harvest to send workers in his harvest. The world is increasingly abundant and the workers increasingly fewer.

*After this the Lord appointed seventy (-two) others whom he sent ahead of him in pairs to every town and place he intended to visit. He said to them, "The harvest is abundant but the labourers are few; so ask the master of the harvest to send out labourers for his harvest. Go on your way; behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves. Carry no money bag, no sack, no sandals; and greet no one along the way. Into whatever house you enter, first say, 'Peace to this household.' If a peaceful person lives there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. Stay in the same house and eat and drink what is offered to you, for the labourer deserves his payment. Do not move about from one house to another. Whatever town you enter and they welcome you, eat what is set before you, cure the sick in it and say to them, 'The kingdom of God is at hand for you.'*

Prayer for the Lord to send labourers must be born from a very high principle of faith. Like Jesus, every worker in him is responsible for the salvation of the world. No one alone might reach every man. Being compelled by universal mission - go throughout the world - without any interruption, he must ask workers to the Lord so that no one is excluded from listening to the Gospel.

Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, Angels and Saints, send labourers for the harvest.

## TEACHER, DO YOU NOT CARE THAT WE ARE PERISHING?

## 2Sam 12,1-7a.10-17; Ps 50; Mk 4,35-41

### 27 JANUARY

Psalm 18 (17) reveals to us that the righteous has in the Lord a powerful Saviour, always ready to come to his aid, as soon as he hears a cry for help. The just asks and the Lord listens, comes, frees and saves with immediate promptness.

*“I love You, O Lord, my strength.”**The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.**I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, And I am saved from my enemies. The cords of death encompassed me, And the torrents of ungodliness terrified me.**The cords of Sheol surrounded me; The snares of death confronted me.**In my distress I called upon the Lord, And cried to my God for help; He heard my voice out of His temple, And my cry for help before Him came into His ears.* *Then the earth shook and quaked; And the foundations of the mountains were trembling And were shaken, because He was angry.**Smoke went up out of His nostrils, And fire from His mouth devoured; Coals were kindled by it.**He bowed the heavens also, and came down With thick darkness under His feet.**He rode upon a cherub and flew; And He sped upon the wings of the wind.**He made darkness His hiding place, His canopy around Him, Darkness of waters, thick clouds of the skies.*

*From the brightness before Him passed His thick clouds, Hailstones and coals of fire.**The Lord also thundered in the heavens, And the Most High uttered His voice, Hailstones and coals of fire.**He sent out His arrows, and scattered them, And lightning flashes in abundance, and routed them.**Then the channels of water appeared, And the foundations of the world were laid bare At Your rebuke, O Lord, At the blast of the breath of Your nostrils.* *He sent from on high, He took me; He drew me out of many waters.**He delivered me from my strong enemy, And from those who hated me, for they were too mighty for me.**They confronted me in the day of my calamity, But the Lord was my stay.**He brought me forth also into a broad place; He rescued me, because He delighted in me.* *The Lord has rewarded me according to my righteousness; According to the cleanness of my hands He has recompensed me.**For I have kept the ways of the Lord, And have not wickedly departed from my God (Ps 18 (17) 1-22).*

In the New Testament there is a substantial change, already somehow revealed by the Book of Wisdom and by many other prophecies. Every ancient word of God finds its full fulfilment in Christ the Lord. He shouts to the Lord. But he was not freed from the cross, from suffering, but from the same body of suffering. In death, after the cross, he was given a body of light, clothed with eternal glory, no longer subject either to death, or to pain, or to suffering. Now his body is incorruptible and immortal.

*In the days when he was in the flesh, he offered prayers and supplications with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Son though he was, he learned obedience from what he suffered; and when he was made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, declared by God high priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Heb 5,7-10).*

Jesus wants his disciples to live according to this new faith. Tomorrow, going through the world, they might not be saved from the harassment of the world. They will have to endure every hurricane and every storm. They will have to know that the Lord is with them, even if apparently he seems to be asleep. They will have to leave the modalities of salvation to him. He alone in his divine wisdom knows for which ways to lead his chosen ones.

*On that day, as evening drew on, he said to them, "Let us cross to the other side." Leaving the crowd, they took him with them in the boat just as he was. And other boats were with him. A violent squall came up and waves were breaking over the boat, so that it was already filling up. Jesus was in the stern, asleep on a cushion. They woke him and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" He woke up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Quiet! Be still!" The wind ceased and there was great calm. Then he asked them, "Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith?" They were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this whom even wind and sea obey?"*

True faith is in prayer that knows how to deliver itself to every storm. The Lord will know when and according to which modalities: whether by calming the storm or by letting ourselves be carried away by it that asks for the offer of our life. Jesus in the storm of the cross handed his life over to the Father. The Father gives it back to him completely, but in a supernatural, heavenly and divine way. Today this faith Jesus asks to his disciples.

Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, Angels and Saints make us of perfect faith.

## A NEW TEACHING WITH AUTHORITY

## Dt 18,15-20; Ps 94; 1 Cor 7,32-35; Mk 1,21-28

### 28 JANUARY – IV SUNDAY O.T. – B

Jesus is the Different from Moses, from John the Baptist, from every other man of yesterday, today, tomorrow and always. His difference is his uniqueness of Creator, God, Incarnate God, Giver of grace and truth, of dwelling in the bosom of the Father. This eternal, divine, human difference of salvation, redemption, revelation, life, truth, way, resurrection and light, is all contained *"in synthesis"* in the Prologue of the Gospel according to John.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came to be through him, and without him nothing came to be. What came to be through him was life, and this life was the light of the human race; the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. A man named John was sent from God. He came for testimony, to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to testify to the light. The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came to be through him, but the world did not know him. He came to what was his own, but his own people did not accept him. But to those who did accept him he gave power to become children of God, to those who believe in his name, who were born not by natural generation nor by human choice nor by a man's decision but of God. And the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory, the glory as of the Father's only Son, full of grace and truth. John testified to him and cried out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'The one who is coming after me ranks ahead of me because he existed before me.'" From his fullness we have all received, grace in place of grace, because while the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God. The only Son, God, who is at the Father's side, has revealed him (Jn 1,1-18).*

Moses gives the law, John testifies that Jesus is the Lamb of God. Every man, including Moses and John, are his creatures and his servants. They are for him in the mystery of creation and must be for him also in the mystery of redemption. He who is not for him is without life, for he is his life. But he will also be without any light, for He is the Light. Every man can exercise any authority on earth, only by participation in the authority of his Creator and Lord. Jesus possesses authority by divine nature, but also by divine person. To Him, the Father has given everything. Everything was placed under his government. Nothing is of the Father that has not been given to Him. Even the Father has placed himself entirely in the heart of the Son to be given by the Son to man. The scribes had a very reduced authority both by humanity, but above all by the sins of pride, vanity, foolishness and infinite ignorance. Jesus also humanly speaking is clothed with all the authority that comes from his highest holiness.

*Then they came to Capernaum, and on the Sabbath he entered the synagogue and taught. The people were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes. In their synagogue was a man with an unclean spirit; he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are - the Holy One of God!" Jesus rebuked him and said, "Quiet! Come out of him!" The unclean spirit convulsed him and with a loud cry came out of him. All were amazed and asked one another, "What is this? A new teaching with authority. He commands even the unclean spirits and they obey him." His fame spread everywhere throughout the whole region of Galilee.*

Today, falsehood spreads and is rooted in the garden of the Church more than weeds in a field. It is said by people retained distinguishable that Satan is an invention of men. Then we must conclude that this episode of the Gospel is all a staging. It's a real theatre. An invention of the evangelists to show in a world of superstitious people that Jesus is stronger than any other force. But if this episode is theatre, the whole gospel is a theatre. If the whole Gospel is a theatre, then it is more than right to create other pieces of theatre for our times. One also exits from the objectivity of the Cross and Resurrection and enters into the law of the show that demands new pieces for new times. One word and it is the death of the Gospel. So much can a dirty rumour do.

Virgin Mary, Mother of Redemption, Angels and Saints, give us the objectivity of the Gospel.

## HIS PITY HAS DONE FOR YOU

## 2Sam 15,13-14.30; 16,5-13a; Ps 3; Mk 5,1-20

### 29 JANUARY

Today, so much, indeed a great deal of confusion reigns on the Lord's mercy. The elemental truths, or the first principles for its definition are missing. Mercy is every gift that from God pours out on the whole creation and in particular on man, who is always in need of all grace, light, wisdom, truth, justice and holiness. After sin, every gift of God is given for pure mercy. From death we pass to life, from the slavery of Satan to the freedom of the Sons of God in virtue of the blood of Christ Jesus poured out for us from the Cross, as St. Paul teaches when we were sinners and enemies of God. If mercy on the Lord's part it is a pure gift, its reception is conditioned by the obedience to each of his Words. Mercy in accepted in repentance, conversion and faith in the Gospel.

One lives in the mercy of God to increase the mercy of Christ the Lord, remaining in his Gospel. Mercy is not free even in God. It matures and is transformed into a fruit of salvation on the tree of the Cross in the body of Christ the Lord. Christ Crucified is the mercy of God. The price paid by God to be merciful is very high: the blood of his Only Son. It is from the rent heart of Christ that the perennial river of the mercy of the Father pours out. Being with Baptism the Christian and Christ Jesus a single body, even the Christian must pour out all his blood from the cross of obedience to the Father, if he wants to become an instrument of divine mercy in the world. Therefore, all those theories that exclude the baptized from the obligation to become a sacrifice of redemption in Christ are false.

*They came to the other side of the sea, to the territory of the Gerasenes. When he got out of the boat, at once a man from the tombs who had an unclean spirit met him. The man had been dwelling among the tombs, and no one could restrain him any longer, even with a chain. In fact, he had frequently been bound with shackles and chains, but the chains had been pulled apart by him and the shackles smashed, and no one was strong enough to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the hillsides he was always crying out and bruising himself with stones. Catching sight of Jesus from a distance, he ran up and prostrated himself before him, crying out in a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me!" (He had been saying to him, "Unclean spirit, come out of the man!") He asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "Legion is my name. There are many of us." And he pleaded earnestly with him not to drive them away from that territory. Now a large herd of swine was feeding there on the hillside. And they pleaded with him, "Send us into the swine. Let us enter them." And he let them, and the unclean spirits came out and entered the swine. The herd of about two thousand rushed down a steep bank into the sea, where they were drowned.*

*The swineherds ran away and reported the incident in the town and throughout the countryside. And people came out to see what had happened. As they approached Jesus, they caught sight of the man who had been possessed by Legion, sitting there clothed and in his right mind. And they were seized with fear. Those who witnessed the incident explained to them what had happened to the possessed man and to the swine. Then they began to beg him to leave their district. As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed pleaded to remain with him. But he would not permit him but told him instead, "Go home to your family and announce to them all that the Lord in his pity has done for you." Then the man went off and began to proclaim in the Decapolis what Jesus had done for him; and all were amazed.*

Liberation from impure spirits is by very pure grace. The possessed did nothing to be liberated. Christ came and ordered the impure spirits to get out of that body. If Jesus had left the healed man in these conditions, his miracle would have been just a philanthropic act. Instead, from a philanthropic act he transforms it into a true act of faith. This healed man must remain in his pagan land and enlighten it with the powerful light of Jesus the Lord. He will have to tell all the people in his territory what the Lord has done for him and how great his mercy has been. He will have to tell the miracle so that his fellow citizens let the invisible devil that produces a visible fruit: the insatiable greed towards the goods of the earth and every other idolatry, be taken away from them.

Virgin Mary, Mother of the Redemption, Angels and Saints make us instruments of mercy.

## WHO HAS TOUCHED MY CLOTHES?

## 2Sam 18,9-10.14b.21a.24-25a.30-32; 19,1-3; Ps 85; Mk 5,21-43

### 30 JANUARY

A woman has been living for twelve years in a state of enduring impurity. Her life is a real silent martyr because of the devastating effects of her being impure without there being any way to get out of this infirmity. In vain she consumed her substances by turning from one physician to another. When you pray to the Lord, you trust in his mercy, his grace comes in an unexpected way. The God of Abraham puts Jesus, his Son, in front of this woman. He also gives her the right inspiration on how to live in order to gain the miracle. Since by law she is compared to a person who is sick of leprosy, she will have to stay away from any relationship with other people, she would make them impure if they came into physical contact. Here is the greatness of the mercy of our God. He suggests to the woman to touch the flap of the cloak of Jesus secretly. This is sufficient for her healing. But Jesus does not want that great miracle to be hidden. Other people might need to be healed, cured, and it is right that it is divulged, even because it is always necessary to raise a great glory to God and, in addition, to increase the faith of every other man in Christ the true sent by God to bring life to our death.

*When Jesus had crossed again (in the boat) to the other side, a large crowd gathered around him, and he stayed close to the sea. One of the synagogue officials, named Jairus, came forward. Seeing him he fell at his feet and pleaded earnestly with him, saying, "My daughter is at the point of death. Please, come lay your hands on her that she may get well and live." He went off with him, and a large crowd followed him and pressed upon him.*

*There was a woman afflicted with haemorrhages for twelve years. She had suffered greatly at the hands of many doctors and had spent all that she had. Yet she was not helped but only grew worse. She had heard about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak. She said, "If I but touch his clothes, I shall be cured." Immediately her flow of blood dried up. She felt in her body that she was healed of her affliction. Jesus, aware at once that power had gone out from him, turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who has touched my clothes?" But his disciples said to him, "You see how the crowd is pressing upon you, and yet you ask, 'Who touched me?'" And he looked around to see who had done it. The woman, realizing what had happened to her, approached in fear and trembling. She fell down before Jesus and told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction."*

*While he was still speaking, people from the synagogue official's house arrived and said, "Your daughter has died; why trouble the teacher any longer?" Disregarding the message that was reported, Jesus said to the synagogue official, "Do not be afraid; just have faith." He did not allow anyone to accompany him inside except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. When they arrived at the house of the synagogue official, he caught sight of a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. So he went in and said to them, "Why this commotion and weeping? The child is not dead but asleep." And they ridiculed him. Then he put them all out. He took along the child's father and mother and those who were with him and entered the room where the child was. He took the child by the hand and said to her, "Talitha koum," which means, "Little girl, I say to you, arise!" The girl, a child of twelve, arose immediately and walked around. (At that) they were utterly astounded. He gave strict orders that no one should know this and said that she should be given something to eat.*

On the contrary, the case of Jairus is different. His daughter is severely ill and in danger of death. He runs to Jesus and asks that he visits and give her perfect healing. Along the way, his daughter dies. What's the use of further disturbing the Master? Now Jesus is the one to be revealed as the true Master. He asks Jairus not to fear. He must have only faith. He had faith until now, he must have faith for all other moments. Whoever addresses Him to ask for grace must never retreat from the faith. Death can destroy all humanity, but he must continue to believe in the God that gives life. Whoever wants to be a master in faith must himself be full of faith in the Lord. One is a false master, if what he promises is not done. Jairus faith is in Christ that gives life to his daughter. If Christ does not give life, what must Jairus have faith on? Faith in others originates from our faith. If our faith is dead, no faith will arise from it. The tree of true faith that is our heart and our spirit is missing.

Virgin Mary, Mother of Redemption, Angels and Saints, make us true trees of faith.

## AND THEY TOOK OFFENSE AT HIM

## 2Sam 24,2.9-17; Ps 31; Mk 6,1-6

### 31 JANUARY

Every man comes from non existence. According to Scripture, his greatness is nothingness or the dust of the ground. It is the Lord the one that calls him to existence. But it is also He who elevates him according to his will. We can assert that nothing is in man that is of the man, but in him everything comes by the will of his God. That the Lord chooses the little ones, the fragile and the weak to build his kingdom, the Lord Jesus himself reveals it. The revelation of Jesus is assumed by Paul and applied to the community of Corinth, whose members had let themselves be caught by the temptation of human grandeur.

*"I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him (Mt 11,25-27).*

*Consider, in fact, your call, brothers: there are not many among you from the human point of view, neither many powerful nor many nobles. But what is foolish for the world, God chose him to confuse the wise; what is weak for the world, God chose him to confound the strong; what is ignoble and despised for the world, what is nothing, God has chosen him to reduce to nothing the things that are, so that no one can boast before God. Thanks to him you are in Christ Jesus, who for us it has become wisdom through the work of God, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, because, as it is written, he who boasts let him boast himself in the Lord (1Cor 1: 26-31).*

If we then start thinking about David's greatness, we must confess that not even his father considered him worthy of being consecrated as a king: he was a shepherd of sheep.

*Then Samuel asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?" Jesse replied, "There is still the youngest, who is tending the sheep." Samuel said to Jesse, "Send for him; we will not begin the sacrificial banquet until he arrives here." Jesse sent and had the young man brought to them. He was ruddy, a youth handsome to behold and making a splendid appearance. The Lord said, "There-anoint him, for this is he!" Then Samuel, with the horn of oil in hand, anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and from that day on, the spirit of the Lord rushed upon David. When Samuel took his leave, he went to Ramah (1Sam 16,11-13).*

In the wisdom of Ancient Scripture, Jesus is the ideal man to be raised in the midst of the people of the Lord: he is poor, humble, belongs to a simple family without any appearance of some earthly greatness. He is the humblest among the humble, the poorest among the poor, the man among men and the last among the last. But if we come out of the wisdom that comes from God, then we must look for the signs of human grandeur. But God does not work with the greats of the earth. Our God is the God of the humble and the little ones and he works with them. The scandal of the inhabitants of Nazareth is the result of their ignorance of ancient wisdom. They read Christ Jesus with fleshly eyes, with fleshly mentality and with the wisdom of the flesh. They will always be scandalized by Him. For Paul today and always crucified Jesus will be a scandal for the Jews. Their wisdom that comes from the flesh cannot conceive a Crucified Messiah. Yet all of their Old Scriptures speak of the Messiah as of the One who has been pierced. The Messiah taken from humility.

*He departed from there and came to his native place, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished. They said, "Where did this man get all this? What kind of wisdom has been given him? What mighty deeds are wrought by his hands! Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honour except in his native place and among his own kin and in his own house." So he was not able to perform any mighty deed there, apart from curing a few sick people by laying his hands on them. e was amazed at their lack of faith. He went around to the villages in the vicinity teaching.*

Jesus was astonished at their disbelief because it is not possible that people who read, meditate and discuss on the Word of God live on prejudices and thoughts contrary to it. What is the point of reading the Word if it does not change the mind?

Virgin Mary, Mother of Redemption, Angels and Saints, watch over our faith.