1 Shout for all you are worth, do not hold back, raise your voice like a trumpet. To my people proclaim their rebellious acts, to the House of Jacob, their sins.
2 They seek for me day after day, they long to know my ways, like a nation that has acted uprightly and not forsaken the law of its God. They ask me for laws that are upright, they long to be near God:
3 `Why have we fasted, if you do not see, why mortify ourselves if you never notice?' Look, you seek your own pleasure on your fastdays and you exploit all your workmen;
4 look, the only purpose of your fasting is to quarrel and squabble and strike viciously with your fist. Fasting like yours today will never make your voice heard on high.
5 Is that the sort of fast that pleases me, a day when a person inflicts pain on himself? Hanging your head like a reed, spreading out sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call fasting, a day acceptable to the Lord?
6 Is not this the sort of fast that pleases me: to break unjust fetters, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break all yokes?
7 Is it not sharing your food with the hungry, and sheltering the homeless poor; if you see someone lacking clothes, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own kin?
8 Then your light will blaze out like the dawn and your wound be quickly healed over. Saving justice will go ahead of you and the Lord's glory come behind you.
9 Then you will cry for help and the Lord will answer; you will call and he will say, 'I am here.' If you do away with the yoke, the clenched fist and malicious words,
10 if you deprive yourself for the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, your light will rise in the darkness, and your darkest hour will be like noon.
11 The Lord will always guide you, will satisfy your needs in the scorched land; he will give strength to your bones and you will be like a watered garden, like a flowing spring whose waters never run dry.
12 Your ancient ruins will be rebuilt; you will build on age-old foundations. You will be called 'Breach-mender', 'Restorer of streets to be lived in'.
13 If you refrain from breaking the Sabbath, from taking your own pleasure on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath 'Delightful', and the day sacred to the Lord 'Honourable', if you honour it by abstaining from travel, from seeking your own pleasure and from too much talk,
14 then you will find true happiness in the Lord, and I shall lead you in triumph over the heights of the land. I shall
These are the names of the Israelites who went with Jacob to Egypt, each of them went with his family:
2 Reuben, Simeon, Levi and Judah,
3 Issachar, Zebulun and Benjamin,
4 Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher.
5 In all, the descendants of Jacob numbered seventy persons. Joseph was in Egypt already.
6 Then Joseph died, and his brothers, and all that generation.
7 But the Israelites were fruitful and prolific; they became so numerous and powerful that eventually the whole land was full of them.

8 Then there came to power in Egypt a new king who had never heard of Joseph.
9 `Look,' he said to his people, `the Israelites are now more numerous and stronger than we are.
10 We must take precautions to stop them from increasing any further, or if war should break out, they might join the
ranks of our enemies. They might take arms against us and then escape from the country.'

11 Accordingly they put taskmasters over the Israelites to wear them down by forced labour. In this way they built the store-cities of Pithom and Rameses for Pharaoh.

12 But the harder their lives were made, the more they increased and spread, until people came to fear the Israelites.

13 So the Egyptians gave them no mercy in the demands they made,

14 making their lives miserable with hard labour: with digging clay, making bricks, doing various kinds of field-work—all sorts of labour that they imposed on them without mercy.

15 The king of Egypt then spoke to the Hebrew midwives, one of whom was called Shiphrah, and the other Puah.

16 `When you attend Hebrew women in childbirth,' he said, `look at the two stones. If it is a boy, kill him; if a girl, let her live.'

17 But the midwives were God-fearing women and did not obey the orders of the king of Egypt, but allowed the boys to live.

18 So the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and said to them, `What do you mean by allowing the boys to live?'

19 The midwives said to Pharaoh, `Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women, they are hardy and give birth before the midwife can get to them.'

20 For this, God was good to the midwives, and the people went on increasing and growing more powerful;
21 and since the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.
22 Pharaoh then gave all his people this command: `Throw every new-born boy into the river, but let all the girls live.'

FRIDAY

First Reading From the Book of Exodus
(Ex. 2:1-24)

1 There was a man descended from Levi who had taken a woman of Levi as his wife.
2 She conceived and gave birth to a son and, seeing what a fine child he was, she kept him hidden for three months.
3 When she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him; coating it with bitumen and pitch, she put the child inside and laid it among the reeds at the River's edge.
4 His sister took up position some distance away to see what would happen to him.
5 Now Pharaoh's daughter went down to bathe in the river, while her maids walked along the riverside. Among the reeds she noticed the basket, and she sent her maid to fetch it.
6 She opened it and saw the child: the baby was crying. Feeling sorry for it, she said, `This is one of the little Hebrews.'
7 The child's sister then said to Pharaoh's daughter, 'Shall I go and find you a nurse among the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?'
8 'Yes,' said Pharaoh's daughter, and the girl went and called the child's own mother.
9 Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Take this child away and nurse it for me. I shall pay you myself for doing so.' So the woman took the child away and nursed it.
10 When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter who treated him like a son; she named him Moses 'because', she said, 'I drew him out of the water.'
11 It happened one day, when Moses was grown up, that he went to see his kinsmen. While he was watching their forced labour he also saw an Egyptian striking a Hebrew, one of his kinsmen.
12 Looking this way and that and seeing no one in sight, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.
13 On the following day he came back, and there were two Hebrews, fighting. He said to the man who was in the wrong, 'What do you mean by hitting your kinsman?'
14 'And who appointed you', the man retorted, 'to be prince over us and judge? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?' Moses was frightened. 'Clearly that business has come to light,' he thought.
15 When Pharaoh heard of the matter, he tried to put Moses to death, but Moses fled from Pharaoh. He went into Midianite territory and sat down beside a well.
16 Now there was a priest of Midian with seven daughters. They used to come to draw water and fill the troughs to
17 Some shepherds came and drove them away, but Moses sprang to their help and watered their flock.
18 When they returned to their father Reuel, he said to them, 'Why are you back so early today?'
19 'An Egyptian protected us from the shepherds,' they said, 'and he even drew water for us and watered the flock.'
20 'And where is he?' he asked his daughters. 'Why did you leave the man there? Ask him to eat with us.'
21 Moses agreed to stay on there with the man, who gave him his daughter Zipporah in marriage.
22 She gave birth to a son, whom he named Gershom 'because', he said, 'I am an alien in a foreign land.'
23 During this long period the king of Egypt died. The Israelites, groaning in their slavery, cried out for help and from the depths of their slavery their cry came up to God.
24 God heard their groaning; God remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

SATURDAY

First Reading From the Book of Exodus
(Exodus 3:1-22)

1 Moses was looking after the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led it to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the mountain of God.
2 The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame blazing
from the middle of a bush. Moses looked; there was the bush blazing, but the bush was not being burnt up.

3 Moses said, `I must go across and see this strange sight, and why the bush is not being burnt up.'

4 When the Lord saw him going across to look, God called to him from the middle of the bush. `Moses, Moses!' he said. `Here I am,' he answered.

5 `Come no nearer,' he said. `Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.

6 I am the God of your ancestors,' he said, `the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' At this Moses covered his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

7 The Lord then said, `I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying for help on account of their taskmasters. Yes, I am well aware of their sufferings.

8 And I have come down to rescue them from the clutches of the Egyptians and bring them up out of that country, to a country rich and broad, to a country flowing with milk and honey, to the home of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites.

9 Yes indeed, the Israelites' cry for help has reached me, and I have also seen the cruel way in which the Egyptians are oppressing them.

10 So now I am sending you to Pharaoh, for you to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.'

11 Moses said to God, `Who am I to go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?'

12 `I shall be with you,' God said, `and this is the sign by
which you will know that I was the one who sent you. After you have led the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain.'

13 Moses then said to God, `Look, if I go to the Israelites and say to them, "The God of your ancestors has sent me to you," and they say to me, "What is his name?" what am I to tell them?'

14 God said to Moses, `I am he who is.' And he said, `This is what you are to say to the Israelites, "I am has sent me to you."' 

15 God further said to Moses, `You are to tell the Israelites, "The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you." This is my name for all time, and thus I am to be invoked for all generations to come.

16 `Go, gather the elders of Israel together and tell them, "The Lord, the God of your ancestors, has appeared to me-the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob-and has indeed visited you and seen what is being done to you in Egypt, 17 and has said: I shall bring you out of the misery of Egypt to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, to a country flowing with milk and honey."

18 They will listen to your words, and you and the elders of Israel are to go to the king of Egypt and say to him, "The Lord, the God of the Hebrews, has encountered us. So now please allow us to make a three-days' journey into the desert and sacrifice to the Lord our God."

19 I am well aware that the king of Egypt will not let you
go unless he is compelled by a mighty hand;
20 he will not let you go until I have stretched out my arm
and struck Egypt with all the wonders I intend to work
there.
21 I shall ensure that the Egyptians are so much impressed
with this people that when you go, you will not go empty-
handed.
22 Every woman will ask her neighbour and the woman
staying in her house for silver and golden jewellery, and
clothing. In these you will dress your own sons and
daughters, despoiling the Egyptians of them.'

FIRST WEEK OF LENT

SUNDAY

First Reading From the Book of Exodus
(Exodus 5:1-23; 6:1)

1 After this, Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and said to
him, `This is what the Lord, God of Israel, says, "Let my
people go, so that they can hold a feast in my honour in the
desert."'
2 `Who is the Lord,' Pharaoh replied, `for me to obey what
he says and let Israel go? I know nothing of the Lord, and I
will not let Israel go.'
3 `The God of the Hebrews has encountered us,' they
replied. 'Give us leave to make a three-days' journey into the desert and sacrifice to the Lord our God, or he will strike us with a plague or with the sword.'

4 The king of Egypt said to them, 'Moses and Aaron, what do you mean by distracting the people from their work? Get back to your forced labour.'

5 And Pharaoh said, 'Now that the people have grown to such numbers in the country, what do you mean by interrupting their forced labour?'

6 That very day, Pharaoh gave the order to the people's taskmasters and their scribes,

7 'Do not go on providing the people with straw for brickmaking as before; let them go and gather straw for themselves.

8 But you will exact the same quantity of bricks from them as before, not reducing it at all, since they are lazy, and that is why their cry is, "Let us go and sacrifice to our God."

9 Give these people more work to do, and see they do it instead of listening to lying speeches.'

10 The people's taskmasters and scribes went out to speak to the people and said, 'Pharaoh says this, "I shall not provide you with any more straw.

11 Go and collect straw for yourselves where you can find it. But your output is not to be any less."'

12 So the people scattered all over Egypt to gather stubble for their straw.

13 The taskmasters harassed them. 'You must complete your daily quota,' they said, 'just as when the straw was there.'
14 And the Israelites' foremen whom Pharaoh's taskmasters had put in charge of them, were flogged and asked, `Why have you not fulfilled your quota of bricks made today as before?'

15 The Israelites' foremen went and appealed to Pharaoh. `Why do you treat your servants like this?' they said.

16 `No straw is provided for your servants, yet still the cry is, "Make bricks!" And now your servants are being flogged! . . .'

17 `You are lazy, lazy,' he retorted. `That is why you say, "Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord."

18 Get back to your work at once. You will not be provided with straw; all the same, you will deliver the quota of bricks.'

19 The Israelites' foremen saw they were in a difficult position on being told, `You will not reduce your daily production of bricks.'

20 As they left Pharaoh's presence, they met Moses and Aaron who were standing in their way.

21 `May the Lord look down at you and judge!' they said to them. `You have brought us into bad odour with Pharaoh and his officials; you have put a sword into their hand to kill us.'

22 Moses went back to the Lord and said, `Lord, why do you treat this people so harshly? Why did you send me?

23 Ever since I came to Pharaoh and spoke to him in your name, he has ill-treated this people, and you have done nothing at all about rescuing your people.'
1 The Lord then said to Moses, 'Now you will see what I am going to do to Pharaoh. A mighty hand will force him to let them go, a mighty hand will force him to expel them from his country.'

MONDAY

First Reading From the Book of Exodus (Exodus 6:2-13)

2 God spoke to Moses and said to him, 'I am the Lord.  
3 To Abraham, Isaac and Jacob I appeared as El Shaddai, but I did not make my name the Lord known to them.  
4 I also made my covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, the country in which they were living as aliens.  
5 Furthermore, I have heard the groaning of the Israelites, enslaved by the Egyptians, and have remembered my covenant.  
6 So say to the Israelites, "I am the Lord. I shall free you from the forced labour of the Egyptians; I shall rescue you from their slavery and I shall redeem you with outstretched arm and mighty acts of judgement.  
7 I shall take you as my people and I shall be your God. And you will know that I am the Lord your God, who have freed you from the forced labour of the Egyptians.  
8 Then I shall lead you into the country which I swore I would give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and shall give it to you as your heritage, I, the Lord."'
9 And Moses repeated this to the Israelites, but they would not listen to Moses, so crushed was their spirit and so cruel their slavery.
10 The Lord then said to Moses,
11 'Go to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and tell him to let the Israelites leave his country.'
12 But Moses spoke out in the Lord's presence and said, 'The Israelites have not listened to me, so why should Pharaoh take any notice of a poor speaker like me?'
13 The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron and sent them to Pharaoh king of Egypt, to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

TUESDAY

First Reading From the Book of Exodus
(Exodus 6:29-30; 7:1-25)

29 The Lord said to Moses, 'Tell Pharaoh king of Egypt everything that I am going to say to you.'
30 But Moses said to the Lord's face, 'I am a poor speaker, so why should Pharaoh take any notice of me?'

1 The Lord then said to Moses, 'Look, I have made you as a god for Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron is to be your prophet.
2 You must say whatever I command you, and your brother Aaron will repeat to Pharaoh that he is to let the Israelites
leave his country.
3 But I myself shall make Pharaoh stubborn and shall perform many a sign and wonder in Egypt.
4 Since Pharaoh will not listen to you, I shall lay my hand on Egypt and with great acts of judgement lead my armies, my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.
5 And the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord when I stretch out my hand against the Egyptians and lead the Israelites out of their country.'
6 Moses and Aaron did exactly as the Lord had ordered.
7 Moses was eighty years old and Aaron eighty-three, when they spoke to Pharaoh.
8 The Lord said to Moses and Aaron,
9 `If Pharaoh says to you, "Display some marvel," you must say to Aaron, "Take your staff and throw it down in front of Pharaoh, and let it turn into a serpent!" '
10 Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh and did as the Lord had ordered. Aaron threw down his staff in front of Pharaoh and his officials, and it turned into a serpent.
11 Then Pharaoh in his turn called for the sages and sorcerers, and by their spells the magicians of Egypt did the same.
12 Each threw his staff down and these turned into serpents. But Aaron's staff swallowed up theirs.
13 Pharaoh, however, remained obstinate and, as the Lord had foretold, refused to listen to Moses and Aaron.
14 The Lord then said to Moses, `Pharaoh is adamant. He refuses to let the people go.
15 Go to Pharaoh tomorrow morning as he makes his way
to the water, confront him on the river bank and in your hand take the staff that turned into a snake.

16 Say to him, "The Lord, God of the Hebrews, sent me to say: Let my people go and worship in the desert. Up till now, you have refused to listen.

17 This is what the Lord says: You will know that I am the Lord by this: with the staff that is in my hand I shall strike the waters of the River and they will turn to blood.

18 The fish in the river will die, and the River will stink, and the Egyptians will not be able to drink the river water."

19 The Lord said to Moses, 'Say to Aaron, "Take your staff and stretch out your hand over the waters of Egypt-over their rivers and canals, their marshland, and all their reservoirs-and they will turn to blood. There will be blood throughout the whole of Egypt, even in sticks and stones." '

20 Moses and Aaron did as the Lord ordered. He raised his staff and struck the waters of the River, with Pharaoh and his officials looking on, and all the water in the River turned to blood.

21 The fish in the River died, and the River stank; and the Egyptians could no longer drink the River water. Throughout the whole of Egypt there was blood.

22 But by their spells the magicians of Egypt did the same; Pharaoh remained obstinate and, as the Lord had foretold, refused to listen to Moses and Aaron.

23 Pharaoh turned away and went back into his palace, taking no notice even of this.

24 And the Egyptians all dug holes along the river-bank in
search of drinking water, since they could not drink the River water.
25 After the Lord struck the River, seven days went by.

WEDNESDAY

First Reading From the book of Exodus
(Exodus 10:21-29; 11:1-10)

21 The Lord then said to Moses, `Stretch out your hand towards heaven, and let darkness, darkness so thick that it can be felt, cover Egypt.'
22 So Moses stretched out his hand towards heaven, and for three days there was thick darkness over the whole of Egypt.
23 No one could see anyone else or move about for three days, but all the Israelites did have light where they were living.
24 Pharaoh summoned Moses and said, `Go and worship the Lord, but your flocks and herds are to stay here. Your wives and children can go with you too.'
25 Moses said, `But now you must give us sacrifices and burnt offerings to offer to the Lord our God.
26 And our livestock will go with us too; not a hoof will be left behind; for we may need animals from these to worship the Lord our God; for until we get there we ourselves cannot tell how we are to worship the Lord.'
27 But the Lord made Pharaoh stubborn, and he refused to let them go.
28 Pharaoh said to Moses, 'Out of my sight! Be sure you never see my face again, for the next time you see my face you die!'
29 Moses then said, 'You yourself have said it. I shall never see your face again.'

1 The Lord then said to Moses, 'I shall inflict one more plague on Pharaoh and Egypt, after which he will let you go away. When he lets you go, he will actually drive you out!
2 Now instruct the people that every man is to ask his neighbour, and every woman hers, for silver and golden jewellery.'
3 And the Lord made the Egyptians impressed with the people, while Moses himself was a man of great importance in Egypt in the opinion of Pharaoh's officials and the people.
4 Moses then said, 'The Lord says this, "At midnight I shall pass through Egypt,
5 and all the first-born in Egypt will die, from the first-born of Pharaoh, heir to his throne, to the first-born of the slave-girl at the mill, and all the first-born of the livestock.
6 And throughout Egypt there will be great wailing, such as never was before, nor will be again.
7 But against the Israelites, whether man or beast, never a dog shall bark, so that you may know that the Lord discriminates between Egypt and Israel.'
8 Then all these officials of yours will come down to me and, bowing low before me, say: Go away, you and all the people who follow you! After which, I shall go." And, hot with anger, he left Pharaoh's presence.
9 The Lord then said to Moses, `Pharaoh will not listen to you, so that more of my wonders may be displayed in Egypt.'
10 Moses and Aaron worked all these wonders in Pharaoh's presence, but the Lord made Pharaoh stubborn, and he did not let the Israelites leave his country.

THURSDAY

First Reading From the Book of Exodus
(Exodus 12:1-20)

1 The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt,
2 `This month must be the first of all the months for you, the first month of your year.
3 Speak to the whole community of Israel and say, "On the tenth day of this month each man must take an animal from the flock for his family: one animal for each household.
4 If the household is too small for the animal, he must join with his neighbour nearest to his house, depending on the number of persons. When you choose the animal, you will take into account what each can eat.
5 It must be an animal without blemish, a male one year
old; you may choose it either from the sheep or from the goats.
6 You must keep it till the fourteenth day of the month
when the whole assembly of the community of Israel will
slaughter it at twilight.
7 Some of the blood must then be taken and put on both
door-posts and the lintel of the houses where it is eaten.
8 That night, the flesh must be eaten, roasted over the fire;
it must be eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.
9 Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted
over the fire, with the head, feet and entrails.
10 You must not leave any of it over till the morning:
whatever is left till morning you must burn.
11 This is how you must eat it: with a belt round your
waist, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your
hand. You must eat it hurriedly: it is a Passover in the
Lord's honour.
12 That night, I shall go through Egypt and strike down all
the first-born in Egypt, man and beast alike, and shall
execute justice on all the gods of Egypt, I, the Lord!
13 The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where
you are. When I see the blood I shall pass over you, and
you will escape the destructive plague when I strike Egypt.
14 This day must be commemorated by you, and you must
keep it as a feast in the Lord's honour. You must keep it as
a feast-day for all generations; this is a decree for all time.
15 "For seven days you must eat unleavened bread. On the
first day you must clean the leaven out of your houses, for
anyone who eats leavened bread from the first to the
seventh day must be outlawed from Israel.
16 On the first day you must hold a sacred assembly, and on the seventh day a sacred assembly. On those days no work may be done; you will prepare only what each requires to eat.
17 You must keep the feast of Unleavened Bread because it was on that same day that I brought your armies out of Egypt. You will keep that day, generation after generation; this is a decree for all time.
18 In the first month, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day, you must eat unleavened bread.
19 For seven days there may be no leaven in your houses, since anyone, either stranger or citizen of the country, who eats leavened bread will be outlawed from the community of Israel.
20 You will eat nothing with leaven in it; wherever you live, you will eat unleavened bread."'

FRIDAY

First Reading From the Book of Exodus
(Exodus 12:21-36)

21 Moses summoned all the elders of Israel and said to them, `Go and choose a lamb or kid for your families, and kill the Passover victim.
22 Then take a bunch of hyssop, dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and with the blood from the basin touch the lintel and both door-posts; then let none of you venture out of the house till morning.
23 Then, when the Lord goes through Egypt to strike it, and sees the blood on the lintel and on both door-posts, he will pass over the door and not allow the Destroyer to enter your homes and strike.
24 You will observe this as a decree binding you and your children for all time,
25 and when you have entered the country which the Lord will give you, as he has promised, you will observe this ritual.
26 And when your children ask you, "What does this ritual mean?"
27 you will tell them, "It is the Passover sacrifice in honour of the Lord who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt, and struck Egypt but spared our houses." ' And the people bowed in worship.
28 The Israelites then went away and did as the Lord had ordered Moses and Aaron.
29 And at midnight the Lord struck down all the first-born in Egypt from the first-born of Pharaoh, heir to his throne, to the first-born of the prisoner in the dungeon, and the first-born of all the livestock.
30 Pharaoh and all his officials and all the Egyptians got up in the night, and there was great wailing in Egypt, for there was not a house without its dead.
31 It was still dark when Pharaoh summoned Moses and
Aaron and said, `Up, leave my subjects, you and the Israelites! Go and worship the Lord as you have asked! 32 And take your flocks and herds as you have asked, and go! And bless me too!'
33 The Egyptians urged the people on and hurried them out of the country because, they said, `Otherwise we shall all be dead.'
34 So the people carried off their dough still unleavened, their bowls wrapped in their cloaks, on their shoulders.
35 The Israelites did as Moses had told them and asked the Egyptians for silver and golden jewellery, and clothing.
36 The Lord made the Egyptians so much impressed with the people that they gave them what they asked. So they despoiled the Egyptians.

SATURDAY

First Reading From the Book of Exodus
(Exodus 12:37-49; 13:11-16)

37 The Israelites left Rameses for Succoth, about six hundred thousand on the march-men, that is, not counting their families.
38 A mixed crowd of people went with them, and flocks and herds, quantities of livestock.
39 And with the dough which they had brought from Egypt they baked unleavened cakes, because the dough had not risen, since they had been driven out of Egypt without time
to linger or to prepare food for themselves.
40 The time that the Israelites spent in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years.
41 And on the very day the four hundred and thirty years ended, all the Lord's armies left Egypt.
42 The night when the Lord kept vigil to bring them out of Egypt must be kept as a vigil in honour of the Lord by all Israelites, for all generations.
43 The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, `This is the ritual for the Passover: no alien may eat it,
44 but any slave bought for money may eat it, once you have circumcised him.
45 No stranger and no hired servant may eat it.
46 It must be eaten in one house alone; you will not take any of the meat out of the house; nor may you break any of its bones.
47 `The whole community of Israel must keep it.
48 Should a stranger residing with you wish to keep the Passover in honour of the Lord, all the males of his household must be circumcised: he will then be allowed to keep it and will count as a citizen of the country. But no uncircumcised person may eat it.
49 The same law will apply to the citizen and the stranger resident among you.'

11 `When the Lord has brought you into the Canaanites' country, as he swore to you and your ancestors that he would, and given it to you,
12 to the Lord you must make over whatever first issues
from the womb, and every first-born cast by animals belonging to you: these males belong to the Lord.

13 But every first-born donkey you will redeem with a lamb or kid; if you do not redeem it, you must break its neck. All the human first-born, however, among your sons, you will redeem.

14 And when your son asks you in days to come, "What does this mean?" you will tell him, "By the strength of his hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, out of the place of slave-labour.

15 When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord killed all the first-born in Egypt, of man and beast alike. This is why I sacrifice every male first issuing from the womb to the Lord and redeem every first-born of my sons."

16 This will serve as a sign on your hand would serve, or a headband on your forehead, for by the strength of his hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt.'

SECOND WEEK OF LENT

SUNDAY

First Reading From the Book of Exodus
(Exodus 13:17-22; 14:1-9)

17 When Pharaoh had let the people go, God did not let
them take the road to the Philistines' territory, although that was the shortest, `in case', God thought, `the prospect of fighting makes the people change their minds and turn back to Egypt.'

18 Instead, God led the people a roundabout way through the desert of the Sea of Reeds. The Israelites left Egypt fully armed.

19 Moses took with him the bones of Joseph, since Joseph had put the Israelites on solemn oath with the words, `It is sure that God will visit you,' he had said, `and when that day comes you must take my bones away from here with you.'

20 They set out from Succoth and encamped at Etham, on the edge of the desert.

21 The Lord preceded them, by day in a pillar of cloud to show them the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could march by day and by night.

22 The pillar of cloud never left its place ahead of the people during the day, nor the pillar of fire during the night.

1 The Lord spoke to Moses and said,
2 `Tell the Israelites to turn back and pitch camp in front of Pi-Hahiroth, between Migdol and the sea, facing Baal-Zephon. You must pitch your camp opposite this place, beside the sea,
3 and then Pharaoh will think, "The Israelites are wandering to and fro in the countryside; the desert has closed in on them."
4 I shall then make Pharaoh stubborn and he will set out in pursuit of them; and I shall win glory for myself at the expense of Pharaoh and his whole army, and then the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord.' And the Israelites did this.

5 When Pharaoh king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, he and his officials changed their attitude towards the people. 'What have we done,' they said, 'allowing Israel to leave our service?'

6 So Pharaoh had his chariot harnessed and set out with his troops,

7 taking six hundred of the best chariots and all the other chariots in Egypt, with officers in each.

8 The Lord made Pharaoh king of Egypt stubborn, and he gave chase to the Israelites. The Israelites marched confidently away,

9 but the Egyptians, all Pharaoh's horses, his chariots, his horsemen and his army, gave chase and caught up with them where they lay encamped beside the sea near Pi-Hahiroth, facing Baal-Zephon.

MONDAY

First Reading From the Book of Exodus
(Ex. 14:10-31)

10 As Pharaoh approached, the Israelites looked up-and
there were the Egyptians in pursuit of them! The Israelites were terrified and cried out to the Lord for help.

11 To Moses they said, `Was it for lack of graves in Egypt, that you had to lead us out to die in the desert? What was the point of bringing us out of Egypt?

12 Did we not tell you as much in Egypt? Leave us alone, we said, we would rather work for the Egyptians! We prefer to work for the Egyptians than to die in the desert!'

13 Moses said to the people, `Do not be afraid! Stand firm, and you will see what the Lord will do to rescue you today: the Egyptians you see today you will never see again.

14 The Lord will do the fighting for you; all you need to do is to keep calm.'

15 The Lord then said to Moses, `Why cry out to me? Tell the Israelites to march on.

16 Your part is to raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, so that the Israelites can walk through the sea on dry ground,

17 while I, for my part, shall make the Egyptians so stubborn that they will follow them, and I shall win glory for myself at the expense of Pharaoh and all his army, chariots and horsemen.

18 And when I have won glory for myself at the expense of Pharaoh and his chariots and horsemen, the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord.'

19 Then the angel of God, who preceded the army of Israel, changed station and followed behind them. The pillar of cloud moved from their front and took position behind them.
20 It came between the army of the Egyptians and the army of Israel. The cloud was dark, and the night passed without the one drawing any closer to the other the whole night long.

21 Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord drove the sea back with a strong easterly wind all night and made the sea into dry land. The waters were divided

22 and the Israelites went on dry ground right through the sea, with walls of water to right and left of them.

23 The Egyptians gave chase, and all Pharaoh's horses, chariots and horsemen went into the sea after them.

24 In the morning watch, the Lord looked down on the army of the Egyptians from the pillar of fire and cloud and threw the Egyptian army into confusion.

25 He so clogged their chariot wheels that they drove on only with difficulty, which made the Egyptians say, 'Let us flee from Israel, for the Lord is fighting on their side against the Egyptians!'

26 Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand over the sea and let the waters flow back on the Egyptians and on their chariots and their horsemen.'

27 Moses stretched out his hand over the sea and, as day broke, the sea returned to its bed. The fleeing Egyptians ran straight into it, and the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the middle of the sea.

28 The returning waters washed right over the chariots and horsemen of Pharaoh's entire army, which had followed the Israelites into the sea; not a single one of them was left.
29 The Israelites, however, had marched through the sea on dry ground, with walls of water to right and left of them.
30 That day, the Lord rescued Israel from the clutches of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the sea-shore.
31 When Israel saw the mighty deed that the Lord had performed against the Egyptians, the people revered the Lord and put their faith in the Lord and in Moses, his servant.

TUESDAY

First Reading From the Book of Exodus
(Exodus 16:1-18.35)

1 Setting out from Elim, the whole community of Israelites entered the desert of Sin, lying between Elim and Sinai-on the fifteenth day of the second month after they had left Egypt.
2 And the whole community of Israelites began complaining about Moses and Aaron in the desert
3 and said to them, `Why did we not die at the Lord's hand in Egypt, where we used to sit round the flesh pots and could eat to our heart's content! As it is, you have led us into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death!'
4 The Lord then said to Moses, `Look, I shall rain down bread for you from the heavens. Each day the people must
go out and collect their ration for the day; I propose to test
them in this way to see whether they will follow my law or
not.
5 On the sixth day, however, when they prepare what they
have brought in, this must be twice as much as they collect
on ordinary days.'
6 Moses and Aaron then said to the whole community of
Israelites, `This evening you will know that it was the Lord
who brought you out of Egypt,
7 and tomorrow morning you will see the glory of the
Lord, for the Lord has heard your complaints about him.
What are we, that your complaint should be against us?'
8 Moses then said, `This evening the Lord will give you
meat to eat, and tomorrow morning bread to your heart's
content, for the Lord has heard your complaints about him.
What do we count for? Your complaints are not against us,
but against the Lord.'
9 Moses then said to Aaron, `Say to the whole community
of Israelites, "Approach the Lord's presence, for he has
heard your complaints."'
10 As Aaron was speaking to the whole community of
Israelites, they turned towards the desert, and there the
glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.
11 The Lord then spoke to Moses and said,
12 `I have heard the Israelites' complaints. Speak to them
as follows, "At twilight you will eat meat, and in the
morning you will have bread to your heart's content, and
then you will know that I am the Lord your God."'
13 That evening, quails flew in and covered the camp, and
next morning there was a layer of dew all round the camp. 
14 When the layer of dew lifted, there on the surface of the 
desert was something fine and granular, as fine as hoarfrost 
on the ground. 
15 As soon as the Israelites saw this, they said to one 
another, `What is that ?' not knowing what it was. `That', 
Moses told them, `is the food which the Lord has given 
you to eat. 
16 These are the Lord's orders: Each of you must collect as 
much as he needs to eat-a homer per head for each person 
in his tent.' 
17 The Israelites did this. They collected it, some more, 
some less. 
18 When they measured out what they had collected by the 
homer, no one who had collected more had too much, no 
one who had collected less had too little. Each had 
collected as much as he needed to eat. 

35 The Israelites ate manna for forty years, up to the time 
they reached inhabited country: they ate manna up to the 
time they reached the frontiers of Canaan.

WEDNESDAY

First Reading From the Book of Exodus 
(Exodus 17:1-16)
1 The whole community of Israelites left the desert of Sin, travelling by stages as the Lord ordered. They pitched camp at Rephidim where there was no water for the people to drink.
2 The people took issue with Moses for this and said, 'Give us water to drink.' Moses replied, 'Why take issue with me? Why do you put the Lord to the test?'
3 But tormented by thirst, the people complained to Moses. 'Why did you bring us out of Egypt,' they said, 'only to make us, our children and our livestock, die of thirst?'
4 Moses appealed to the Lord for help. 'How am I to deal with this people?' he said. 'Any moment now they will stone me!'
5 The Lord then said to Moses, 'Go on ahead of the people, taking some of the elders of Israel with you; in your hand take the staff with which you struck the River, and go.  
6 I shall be waiting for you there on the rock (at Horeb). Strike the rock, and water will come out for the people to drink.' This was what Moses did, with the elders of Israel looking on.
7 He gave the place the names Massah and Meribah because of the Israelites' contentiousness and because they put the Lord to the test by saying, 'Is the Lord with us, or not?'
8 The Amalekites then came and attacked Israel at Rephidim.
9 Moses said to Joshua, 'Pick some men and tomorrow morning go out and engage Amalek. I, for my part, shall take my stand on the hilltop with the staff of God in my
10 Joshua did as Moses had told him and went out to engage Amalek, while Moses, Aaron and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

11 As long as Moses kept his arms raised, Israel had the advantage; when he let his arms fall, the advantage went to Amalek.

12 But Moses' arms grew heavy, so they took a stone and put it under him and on this he sat, with Aaron and Hur supporting his arms on each side. Thus his arms remained unwavering till sunset,

13 and Joshua defeated Amalek, putting their people to the sword.

14 The Lord then said to Moses, 'Write this down in a book to commemorate it, and repeat it over to Joshua, for I shall blot out all memory of Amalek under heaven.'

15 Moses then built an altar and named it the Lord-Nissi

16 meaning, 'Lay hold of the Lord's banner! the Lord will be at war with Amalek generation after generation.'

THURSDAY

First Reading From the Book of Exodus
(Exodus 18:13-27)

13 On the following day, Moses took his seat to administer justice for the people, and the people were standing round
him from morning till evening.

14 Seeing all he did for the people, Moses' father-in-law said to him, "Why do you do this for the people, why sit here alone with the people standing round you from morning till evening?"

15 Moses replied to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to consult God.

16 When they have a problem they come to me, and I give a ruling between the one and the other and make God's statutes and laws known to them."

17 Moses' father-in-law then said to him, "What you are doing is not right.

18 You will only tire yourself out, and the people with you too, for the work is too heavy for you. You cannot do it all yourself.

19 Now listen to the advice I am going to give you, and God be with you! Your task is to represent the people to God, to lay their cases before God,

20 and to teach them the statutes and laws, and show them the way they ought to follow and how they ought to behave.

21 At the same time, from the people at large choose capable and God-fearing men, men who are trustworthy and incorruptible, and put them in charge of them as heads of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens,

22 and make them the people's permanent judges. They will refer all important matters to you, but all minor matters they will decide themselves, so making things easier for you by sharing the burden with you.
23 If you do this—and may God so command you—you will be able to stand the strain, and all these people will go home satisfied.'
24 Moses took his father-in-law's advice and did just as he said.
25 Moses chose capable men from all Israel and put them in charge of the people as heads of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens.
26 These acted as the people's permanent judges. They referred hard cases to Moses but decided minor matters themselves.
27 Moses then set his father-in-law on his way, and he travelled back to his own country.

FRIDAY

First Reading From the Book of Exodus
(Exodus 19:1-19; 20:18-21)

1 Three months to the day after leaving Egypt, the Israelites reached the desert of Sinai.
2 Setting out from Rephidim, they reached the desert of Sinai and pitched camp in the desert; there, facing the mountain, Israel pitched camp.
3 Moses then went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, "Say this to the House of Jacob! Tell the Israelites,
4 "You have seen for yourselves what I did to the
Egyptians and how I carried you away on eagle's wings and brought you to me.
5 So now, if you are really prepared to obey me and keep my covenant, you, out of all peoples, shall be my personal possession, for the whole world is mine.
6 For me you shall be a kingdom of priests, a holy nation." Those are the words you are to say to the Israelites.'
7 So Moses went and summoned the people's elders and acquainted them with everything that the Lord had bidden him,
8 and the people all replied with one accord, 'Whatever the Lord has said, we will do.' Moses then reported to the Lord what the people had said.
9 The Lord then said to Moses, 'Look, I shall come to you in a dense cloud so that the people will hear when I speak to you and believe you ever after.' Moses then told the Lord what the people had said.
10 The Lord then said to Moses, 'Go to the people and tell them to sanctify themselves today and tomorrow. They must wash their clothes
11 and be ready for the day after tomorrow; for the day after tomorrow, in the sight of all the people, the Lord will descend on Mount Sinai.
12 You will mark out the limits of the mountain and say, "Take care not to go up the mountain or to touch the edge of it. Anyone who touches the mountain will be put to death.
13 No one may lay a hand on him: he must be stoned or shot by arrow; whether man or beast, he shall not live."
When the ram's horn sounds a long blast, they must go up the mountain.

14 So Moses came down from the mountain to the people; he made the people sanctify themselves and they washed their clothes.

15 He then said to the people, 'Be ready for the day after tomorrow; do not touch a woman.'

16 Now at daybreak two days later, there were peals of thunder and flashes of lightning, dense cloud on the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast; and, in the camp, all the people trembled.

17 Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet God; and they took their stand at the bottom of the mountain.

18 Mount Sinai was entirely wrapped in smoke, because the Lord had descended on it in the form of fire. The smoke rose like smoke from a furnace and the whole mountain shook violently.

19 Louder and louder grew the trumpeting. Moses spoke, and God answered him in the thunder.

18 Seeing the thunder pealing, the lightning flashing, the trumpet blasting and the mountain smoking, the people were all terrified and kept their distance.

19 'Speak to us yourself,' they said to Moses, 'and we will obey; but do not let God speak to us, or we shall die.'

20 Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid; God has come to test you, so that your fear of him, being always in your mind, may keep you from sinning.'
21 So the people kept their distance while Moses approached the dark cloud where God was.

SATURDAY

First Reading From the Book of Exodus
(Exodus 20:1-17)

1 Then God spoke all these words. He said,
2 `I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt, where you lived as slaves.
3 `You shall have no other gods to rival me.
4 `You shall not make yourself a carved image or any likeness of anything in heaven above or on earth beneath or in the waters under the earth.
5 `You shall not bow down to them or serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God and I punish a parent's fault in the children, the grandchildren, and the great-grandchildren among those who hate me;
6 but I act with faithful love towards thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.
7 `You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not leave unpunished anyone who misuses his name.
8 `Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.
9 For six days you shall labour and do all your work,
10 but the seventh day is a Sabbath for the Lord your God. You shall do no work that day, neither you nor your son nor
your daughter nor your servants, men or women, nor your animals nor the alien living with you.

11 For in six days the Lord made the heavens, earth and sea and all that these contain, but on the seventh day he rested; that is why the Lord has blessed the Sabbath day and made it sacred.

12 `Honour your father and your mother so that you may live long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.
13 `You shall not kill.
14 `You shall not commit adultery.
15 `You shall not steal.
16 `You shall not give false evidence against your neighbour.
17 `You shall not set your heart on your neighbour's house. You shall not set your heart on your neighbour's spouse, or servant, man or woman, or ox, or donkey, or any of your neighbour's possessions.'

THIRD WEEK OF LENT

SUNDAY

First Reading From the Book of Exodus
(Exodus 22:20-30; 23:1-9)

20 `You will not molest or oppress aliens, for you yourselves were once aliens in Egypt.
You will not ill-treat widows or orphans; 
if you ill-treat them in any way and they make an appeal to me for help, I shall certainly hear their appeal, 
my anger will be roused and I shall put you to the sword; then your own wives will be widows and your own children orphans.

`If you lend money to any of my people, to anyone poor among you, you will not play the usurer with him: you will not demand interest from him.
If you take someone's cloak in pledge, you will return it to him at sunset.
It is all the covering he has; it is the cloak he wraps his body in; what else will he sleep in? If he appeals to me, I shall listen. At least with me he will find compassion!
You will not revile God, nor curse your people's leader.
`Do not be slow about making offerings from your abundance and your surplus. You will give me the first-born of your children;
you will do the same with your flocks and herds. For the first seven days the first-born will stay with its mother; on the eighth day you will give it to me.
You must be people consecrated to me. You will not eat the meat of anything in the countryside savaged by wild animals; you will throw it to the dogs.'

`You will not spread false rumours. You will not lend support to the wicked by giving untrue evidence.
You will not be led into wrong-doing by the majority nor, when giving evidence in a lawsuit, side with the majority
to pervert the course of justice;
3 nor will you show partiality to the poor in a lawsuit.
4 `If you come on your enemy's ox or donkey straying, you
will take it back to him.
5 If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen
under its load, do not stand back; you must go and help
him with it.
6 `You will not cheat the poor among you of their rights at
law.
7 Keep clear of fraud. Do not cause the death of the
innocent or upright, and do not acquit the guilty.
8 You will accept no bribes, for a bribe blinds the clear-
sighted and is the ruin of the cause of the upright.
9 `You will not oppress the alien; you know how an alien
feels, for you yourselves were once aliens in Egypt.

MONDAY

First Reading From the Book of Exodus
(Exodus 24:1-18)

1 He then said to Moses, `Come up to the Lord, you and
Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of
Israel and bow down at a distance.
2 Moses alone will approach the Lord; the others will not
approach, nor will the people come up with him.'
3 Moses went and told the people all the Lord's words and
all the laws, and all the people answered with one voice, `All the words the Lord has spoken we will carry out!'

4 Moses put all the Lord's words into writing, and early next morning he built an altar at the foot of the mountain, with twelve standing-stones for the twelve tribes of Israel.

5 Then he sent certain young Israelites to offer burnt offerings and sacrifice bullocks to the Lord as communion sacrifices.

6 Moses then took half the blood and put it into basins, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar.

7 Then, taking the Book of the Covenant, he read it to the listening people, who then said, `We shall do everything that the Lord has said; we shall obey.'

8 Moses then took the blood and sprinkled it over the people, saying, `This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you, entailing all these stipulations.'

9 Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and seventy elders of Israel then went up,

10 and they saw the God of Israel beneath whose feet there was what looked like a sapphire pavement pure as the heavens themselves,

11 but he did no harm to the Israelite notables; they actually gazed on God and then ate and drank.

12 The Lord said to Moses, `Come up to me on the mountain. Stay there, and I will give you the stone tablets-the law and the commandment-which I have written for their instruction.'

13 Moses made ready, with Joshua his assistant, and they
went up the mountain of God.
14 He said to the elders, 'Wait here for us until we come back to you. You have Aaron and Hur with you; if anyone has any matter to settle, let him go to them.'
15 Moses then went up the mountain. Cloud covered the mountain.
16 The glory of the Lord rested on Mount Sinai and the cloud covered it for six days. On the seventh day the Lord called to Moses from inside the cloud.
17 To the watching Israelites, the glory of the Lord looked like a devouring fire on the mountain top.
18 Moses went right into the cloud and went on up the mountain. Moses stayed on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

TUESDAY

First Reading From the Book of Exodus
(Exodus 32:1-6.15-34)

1 When the people saw that Moses was a long time before coming down the mountain, they gathered round Aaron and said to him, 'Get to work, make us a god to go at our head; for that Moses, the man who brought us here from Egypt—we do not know what has become of him.'
2 Aaron replied, 'Strip off the gold rings in the ears of your wives and your sons and daughters, and bring them to me.'
3 The people all stripped off the gold rings from their ears
and brought them to Aaron.
4 He received what they gave him, melted it down in a mould and with it made the statue of a calf. `Israel,' the people shouted, `here is your God who brought you here from Egypt!'
5 Observing this, Aaron built an altar before the statue and made this proclamation, `Tomorrow will be a feast in the Lord's honour.'
6 Early next morning they sacrificed burnt offerings and brought communion sacrifices. The people then sat down to eat and drink, and afterwards got up to amuse themselves.
15 Moses turned and came down the mountain with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, tablets inscribed on both sides, inscribed on the front and on the back.
16 The tablets were the work of God, and the writing on them was God's writing, engraved on the tablets.
17 When Joshua heard the noise of the people shouting, he said to Moses, `There is the sound of battle in the camp!'
18 But he replied: No song of victory is this sound, no lament for defeat this sound; but answering choruses I hear!
19 And there, as he approached the camp, he saw the calf and the groups dancing. Moses blazed with anger. He threw down the tablets he was holding, shattering them at the foot of the mountain.
20 He seized the calf they had made and burned it, grinding it into powder which he scattered on the water,
and made the Israelites drink it.
21 Moses then said to Aaron, "What have these people done to you for you to have brought so great a sin on them?"
22 Aaron replied, "My lord should not be so angry. You yourself know what a bad state these people are in!
23 They said to me, "Make us a god to go at our head; for that Moses, the man who brought us here from Egypt-we do not know what has become of him."
24 I then said to them, "Anyone with gold, strip it off!" They gave it to me. I threw it into the fire and out came this calf!"
25 When Moses saw that the people were out of hand—for Aaron had let them get out of hand to the derision of their enemies all round them—
26 Moses then stood at the gate of the camp and shouted, "Who is for the Lord? To me!" And all the Levites rallied round him.
27 He said to them, "The Lord, the God of Israel, says this, "Buckle on your sword, each of you, and go up and down the camp from gate to gate, every man of you slaughtering brother, friend and neighbour." '
28 The Levites did as Moses said, and of the people about three thousand men perished that day.
29 "Today", Moses said, "you have consecrated yourselves to the Lord, one at the cost of his son, another of his brother; and so he bestows a blessing on you today."
30 On the following day Moses said to the people, "You have committed a great sin. But now I shall go up to the
Lord: perhaps I can secure expiation for your sin.'
31 Moses then went back to the Lord and said, `Oh, this people has committed a great sin by making themselves a god of gold.
32 And yet, if it pleased you to forgive their sin. . .! If not, please blot me out of the book you have written!'
33 The Lord said to Moses, `Those who have sinned against me are the ones I shall blot out of my book.
34 So now go and lead the people to the place I promised to you. My angel will indeed go at your head but, on the day of punishment, I shall punish them for their sin.'

WEDNESDAY

First Reading From the Book of Exodus
(Exodus 33:7-11.18-23; 34:5-9.29-35)

7 Moses used to take the Tent and pitch it outside the camp, far away from the camp. He called it the Tent of Meeting. Anyone who wanted to consult the Lord would go out to the Tent of Meeting, outside the camp.
8 Whenever Moses went out to the Tent, the people would all stand up and every man would stand at the door of his tent and watch Moses until he went into the Tent.
9 And whenever Moses went into the Tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and station itself at the entrance to the Tent, while the Lord spoke with Moses.
10 The people could all see the pillar of cloud stationed at
the entrance to the Tent and the people would all stand up
and bow low, each at the door of his tent.
11 The Lord would talk to Moses face to face, as a man
talks to his friend, and afterwards he would come back to
the camp, but the young man who was his servant, Joshua
son of Nun, never left the inside of the Tent.

18 He then said, 'Please show me your glory.'
19 The Lord said, 'I shall make all my goodness pass
before you, and before you I shall pronounce the name the
Lord; and I am gracious to those to whom I am gracious
and I take pity on those on whom I take pity.
20 But my face', he said, 'you cannot see, for no human
being can see me and survive.'
21 Then the Lord said, 'Here is a place near me. You will
stand on the rock,
22 and when my glory passes by, I shall put you in a cleft
of the rock and shield you with my hand until I have gone
past.
23 Then I shall take my hand away and you will see my
back; but my face will not be seen.'

5 And the Lord descended in a cloud and stood with him
there and pronounced the name the Lord.
6 Then the Lord passed before him and called out, 'The
Lord, the Lord, God of tenderness and compassion, slow to
anger, rich in faithful love and constancy,
7 maintaining his faithful love to thousands, forgiving
fault, crime and sin, yet letting nothing go unchecked, and punishing the parent's fault in the children and in the grandchildren to the third and fourth generation!'  

8 Moses immediately bowed to the ground in worship,  
9 then he said, `If indeed I do enjoy your favour, please, my Lord, come with us, although they are an obstinate people; and forgive our faults and sins, and adopt us as your heritage.'

29 When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, as he was coming down the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face was radiant because he had been talking to him.  
30 And when Aaron and all the Israelites saw Moses, the skin on his face was so radiant that they were afraid to go near him.  
31 But Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the leaders of the community rejoined him, and Moses talked to them,  
32 after which all the Israelites came closer, and he passed on to them all the orders that the Lord had given to him on Mount Sinai.  
33 Once Moses had finished speaking to them, he put a veil over his face.  
34 Whenever Moses went into the Lord's presence to speak with him, he took the veil off until he came out. And when he came out, he would tell the Israelites what orders he had been given,  
35 and the Israelites would see Moses' face radiant.
10 The Lord then said, ‘Look, I am now making a covenant: I shall work such wonders at the head of your whole people as have never been worked in any other country or nation, and all the people round you will see what the Lord can do, for what I shall do through you will be awe-inspiring.

11 Mark, then, what I command you today. I am going to drive out the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites before you.  
12 Take care you make no pact with the inhabitants of the country which you are about to enter, or they will prove a snare in your community.

13 You will tear down their altars, smash their cultic stones and cut down their sacred poles,

14 for you will worship no other god, since the Lord's name is the Jealous One; he is a jealous God.

15 Make no pact with the inhabitants of the country or, when they prostitute themselves to their own gods and sacrifice to them, they will invite you and you will partake
of their sacrifice,
16 and then you will choose wives for your sons from among their daughters, and their daughters, prostituting themselves to their own gods, will induce your sons to prostitute themselves to their gods.
17 `You will not cast metal gods for your- self.
18 `You will observe the feast of Unleavened Bread. For seven days you will eat unleavened bread, as I have commanded you, at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in the month of Abib you came out of Egypt.
19 `All that first issues from the womb belongs to me: every male, every first-born of flock or herd.
20 But the first-born donkey you will redeem with an animal from the flock; if you do not redeem it, you must break its neck. All the first-born of your sons you will redeem, and no one will appear before me empty-handed.
21 `For six days you will labour, but on the seventh day you will rest; you will stop work even during ploughing and harvesting.
22 `You will observe the feast of Weeks, of the first-fruits of the wheat harvest, and the feast of Ingathering at the close of the year.
23 `Three times a year all your menfolk will appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel,
24 for I shall dispossess the nations before you and extend your frontiers, and no one will set his heart on your territory when you go away to appear before the Lord your God three times a year.
25 `You will not offer the blood of my sacrificial victim
with leavened bread, nor is the victim offered at the feast of Passover to be left until the following day.

26 `You will bring the best of the first-fruits of your soil to the house of the Lord your God. `You will not boil a kid in its mother's milk.'

27 The Lord then said to Moses, `Put these words in writing, for they are the terms of the covenant which I have made with you and with Israel.'

28 He stayed there with the Lord for forty days and forty nights, eating and drinking nothing, and on the tablets he wrote the words of the covenant - the Ten Words.

29 When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the Testimony in his hands, as he was coming down the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face was radiant because he had been talking to him.

FRIDAY

First Reading From the Book of Exodus
(Exodus 35:30-35;36:1;37:1-9)

30 Moses then said to the Israelites, `Look, the Lord has singled out Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah,
31 and has filled him with the spirit of God in wisdom, knowledge and skill in every kind of craft:
32 in designing and carrying out work in gold and silver and bronze,
33 in cutting stones to be set, in wood carving and in executing every kind of work.
34 And on him and on Oholiab son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan, he has bestowed the gift of teaching,
35 and filled them with the skill to carry out every kind of work, that of the engraver, that of the embroiderer, that of the needleworker in violet-purple, red-purple and crimson materials and fine linen, that of the weaver, and indeed that of every kind of craftsman and designer.'

1 'Bezalel, Oholiab and all the men whom the Lord has endowed with the skill and knowledge to know how to carry out all the work to be done on the sanctuary, will do exactly as the Lord has ordered.'

1 Bezalel made the ark of acacia wood, two and a half cubits long, one and a half cubits wide and one and a half cubits high.
2 He overlaid it, inside and out, with pure gold, and made a gold moulding all round it.
3 He cast four gold rings for it at its four supports: two rings on one side and two rings on the other.
4 He also made shafts of acacia wood and overlaid them with gold,
5 and passed the shafts through the rings on the sides of the ark, by which to carry it.
6 He also made a mercy-seat of pure gold, two and a half
cubits long and one and a half cubits wide, 
7 and modelled two great winged creatures of beaten gold, 
putting them at the two ends of the mercy-seat, 
8 one winged creature at one end and the other winged 
creature at the other end, making the winged creatures of a 
piece with the mercy-seat at either end. 
9 The winged creatures had their wings spread upwards, 
protecting the ark with their wings and facing each other, 
their faces being towards the mercy-seat.

SATURDAY

First Reading From the Book of Exodus
(Exodus 40:16-38)

16 Moses did this; he did exactly as the Lord had ordered 
him. 
17 On the first day of the first month in the second year the 
Dwelling was erected. 
18 Moses erected the Dwelling. He fixed its sockets, set up 
its frames, put its crossbars in position and set up its poles. 
19 He spread the tent over the Dwelling and the covering 
for the tent over that, as the Lord had ordered Moses. 
20 He took the Testimony and put it in the ark, positioned 
the shafts on the ark and put the mercy-seat on top of the 
ark. 
21 He brought the ark into the Dwelling and put the
screening curtain in place, screening the ark of the Testimony, as the Lord had ordered Moses.
22 He put the table inside the Tent of Meeting, against the side of the Dwelling, on the north, outside the curtain, 23 and on it arranged the loaves before the Lord, as the Lord had ordered Moses.
24 He put the lamp-stand inside the Tent of Meeting, opposite the table, on the south side of the Dwelling, 25 and set up the lamps before the Lord, as the Lord had ordered Moses.
26 He put the golden altar inside the Tent of Meeting, in front of the curtain, 27 and on it burnt fragrant incense, as the Lord had ordered Moses.
28 He then put the screen at the entrance to the Dwelling. 29 He put the altar of burnt offerings at the entrance to the Dwelling, to the Tent of Meeting, and on it offered the burnt offering and cereal offering, as the Lord had ordered Moses.
30 He put the basin between the Tent of Meeting and the altar and put water in it for the ablutions, 31 where Moses, Aaron and his sons washed their hands and feet, 32 whenever they entered the Tent of Meeting or approached the altar they washed, as the Lord had ordered Moses. 33 He then set up the court round the Dwelling and the altar and set up the screen at the gate-way to the court. Thus Moses completed the work.
34 The cloud then covered the Tent of Meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the Dwelling.
35 Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting, since the cloud stayed over it and the glory of the Lord filled the Dwelling.
36 At every stage of their journey, whenever the cloud rose from the Dwelling, the Israelites would resume their march.
37 If the cloud did not rise, they would not resume their march until the day it did rise.
38 For the Lord's cloud stayed over the Dwelling during the daytime and there was fire inside the cloud at night, for the whole House of Israel to see, at every stage of their journey.

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FOURTH WEEK OF LENT

SUNDAY

First Reading From the Book of Leviticus (Lev. 8:1-17; 9:22-24)

1 The Lord spoke to Moses and said:
2 `Take Aaron and with him his sons, the vestments, the anointing oil, the bull for the sacrifice for sin, the two rams and the basket of unleavened bread.
3 Then call the whole community together at the entrance
to the Tent of Meeting.'<n
4 Moses did as the Lord ordered; the community gathered at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting,
5 and Moses said to them, `This is what the Lord has ordered to be done.'
6 He made Aaron and his sons come forward and washed them with water.
7 He then dressed him in the tunic, passed the waistband round his waist, vested him in the robe and put the ephod on him. He then put the waistband of the ephod round his waist, fastening it to him.
8 He put the breastplate on him, and placed the urim and thummim in it.
9 He put the turban on his head, and on the front of the turban, the golden flower; this was the symbol of holy consecration, which the Lord had prescribed to Moses.
10 Moses then took the anointing oil and anointed the Dwelling and everything inside it, to consecrate them.
11 He sprinkled the altar seven times and anointed the altar and its accessories, the basin and its stand, to consecrate them.
12 He then poured some of the anointing oil on Aaron's head and anointed him to consecrate him.
13 Moses then made Aaron's sons come forward; he dressed them in tunics, passed the waistbands round their waists and put on their head-dresses, as the Lord had ordered him.
14 He then had the bull for the sacrifice for sin brought forward. Aaron and his sons laid their hands on the victim's
head
15 and Moses slaughtered it. He then took the blood and with his finger put some of it on the horns on the corners of the altar to purify the altar. He then poured the rest of the blood at the foot of the altar, which he consecrated by performing the rite of expiation over it.
16 He then took all the fat covering the entrails, the mass of fat over the liver, both kidneys and their fat; and he burnt this on the altar,
17 but the bull's skin, its meat and its offal he burnt outside the camp, as the Lord had ordered Moses.

22 Aaron then raised his hands towards the people and blessed them. Having thus performed the sacrifice for sin, the burnt offering and the communion sacrifice, he came down
23 and entered the Tent of Meeting with Moses. Then they came out together to bless the people and the glory of the Lord appeared to the entire people:
24 a flame leapt out from the Lord's presence and consumed the burnt offering and fat on the altar. At this sight the entire people shouted for joy and fell on their faces.

MONDAY

First Reading From the Book of Leviticus (Lev. 16:1-28)
1 The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when offering unauthorised fire.
2 The Lord spoke to Moses and said: `Tell Aaron your brother that he may not enter the sanctuary inside the curtain in front of the mercy-seat on the ark whenever he chooses, in case he incurs death, for I appear in a cloud on the mercy-seat.
3 `This is how he must enter the sanctuary: with a young bull for a sacrifice for sin and a ram for a burnt offering.
4 He will put on a tunic of consecrated linen, wear linen drawers on his body, a linen waistband round his waist, and a linen turban on his head. These are the sacred vestments he will put on after washing himself.
5 `From the community of Israelites he will receive two he-goats for a sacrifice for sin and a ram for a burnt offering.
6 After offering the bull as a sacrifice for his own sin and performing the rite of expiation for himself and his family, he will take the two he-goats and place them before the Lord at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.
8 Aaron will then draw lots over the two goats, one lot to be for the Lord and the other lot for Azazel.
9 Aaron will then take the goat on which the lot "For the Lord" has fallen, and offer it as a sacrifice for sin.
10 But the goat on which the lot "For Azazel" has fallen, will be placed alive before the Lord, for the rite of expiation to be performed with it, and for it then to be sent to Azazel in the desert.
11 `Having offered the bull as a sacrifice for his own sin and performed the rite of expiation for himself and for his family, and slaughtered the bull as a sacrifice for sin, 12 Aaron will then fill a censer with live coals from the altar before the Lord, take two handfuls of finely ground aromatic incense and bring this inside the curtain. 13 He will then put the incense on the fire before the Lord, so that the cloud of incense hides the mercy-seat which is on the Testimony and he does not incur death. 14 He will then take some of the bull's blood and sprinkle it with his finger on the eastern side of the mercy-seat. He will sprinkle some of the blood seven times with his finger in front of the mercy-seat. 15 `He will then slaughter the goat for the sacrifice for the sin of the people, and take its blood inside the curtain, and with this blood do as he did with the blood of the bull, sprinkling it on the mercy-seat and in front of it. 16 This is how he must perform the rite of expiation for the sanctuary for the uncleanness of the Israelites, for their acts of rebellion and all their sins. `And this is what he must do for the Tent of Meeting which remains with them, surrounded by their uncleanness. 17 No one must be inside the Tent of Meeting, from the moment he enters to make expiation in the sanctuary until the time he comes out. `When he has made expiation for himself, for his family, and for the whole community of Israel, 18 he must come outside, go to the altar before the Lord and perform the rite of expiation for it. He will take some
of the bull's blood and some of the goat's blood and put it on the horns at the corners of the altar all around it, 19 and sprinkle some of the blood on it seven times with his finger, thus purifying it and setting it apart from the uncleanness of the Israelites.

20 `Once expiation for the sanctuary, the Tent of Meeting and the altar is complete, he will bring the goat which is still alive.

21 Aaron will then lay both his hands on its head and over it confess all the guilt of the Israelites, all their acts of rebellion and all their sins. Having thus laid them on the goat's head, he will send it out into the desert under the charge of a man waiting ready,

22 and the goat will bear all their guilt away into some desolate place. `When he has sent the goat into the desert, 23 Aaron will go back into the Tent of Meeting and take off the linen vestments which he wore to enter the sanctuary and leave them there.

24 He will then wash his body inside the holy place, put on his vestments and come outside to offer his own and the people's burnt offering. He will perform the rite of expiation for himself and for the people,

25 and burn the fat of the sacrifice for sin on the altar.

26 `The man who led the goat away to Azazel will wash his clothes and body before entering the camp.

27 The bull and the goat offered as a sacrifice for sin, the blood of which was taken into the sanctuary for the rite of expiation, must be taken outside the camp, where their skin, meat and offal are to be burnt.
28 The man who burns them will wash his clothes and body before entering the camp.

TUESDAY

First Reading From the Book of Leviticus (Lev. 19:1-18.31-37)

1 The Lord spoke to Moses and said:
2 'Speak to the whole community of Israelites and say: "Be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy.
3 "Each of you will respect father and mother. "And you will keep my Sabbaths; I am the Lord your God.
4 "Do not turn to idols and do not cast metal gods for yourselves. I am the Lord your God.
5 "If you offer a communion sacrifice to the Lord, make it in such a way as to be acceptable.
6 It must be eaten the same day or the day after; whatever is left on the third day must be burnt.
7 If eaten on the third day it would be rotten food and not be acceptable.
8 Anyone who eats it must bear the consequences of this guilt, having profaned the Lord's holiness; that person will be outlawed from his people.
9 "When you reap the harvest of your land, you will not reap to the very edges of the field, nor will you gather the gleanings of the harvest;
10 nor will you strip your vineyard bare, nor pick up the fallen grapes. You will leave them for the poor and the stranger. I am the Lord your God.

11 "You will not steal, nor deal deceitfully or fraudulently with your fellow-citizen.

12 You will not swear by my name with intent to deceive and thus profane the name of your God. I am the Lord.

13 You will not exploit or rob your fellow. You will not keep back the labourer's wage until next morning.

14 You will not curse the dumb or put an obstacle in the way of the blind, but will fear your God. I am the Lord.

15 "You will not be unjust in administering justice. You will neither be partial to the poor nor overawed by the great, but will administer justice to your fellow-citizen justly.

16 You will not go about slandering your own family, nor will you put your neighbour's life in jeopardy. I am the Lord.

17 You will not harbour hatred for your brother. You will reprove your fellow-countryman firmly and thus avoid burdening yourself with a sin.

18 You will not exact vengeance on, or bear any sort of grudge against, the members of your race, but will love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord.

31 "Do not have recourse to the spirits of the dead or to magicians; they will defile you. I, the Lord, am your God.

32 "You will stand up in the presence of grey hair, you will honour the person of the aged and fear your God. I am the
Lord.
33 "If you have resident aliens in your country, you will not molest them.
34 You will treat resident aliens as though they were native-born and love them as yourself-for you yourselves were once aliens in Egypt. I am the Lord your God.
35 "You will not be unjust in administering justice as regards measures of length, weight or capacity. 
36 You will have just scales, just weights, a just ephah and a just hin. I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt;
37 hence you are to keep all my laws and all my customs and put them into practice. I am the Lord."'

WEDNESDAY

First Reading From the Book of Leviticus (Lev. 26:3-17.38-45)

3 "If you live according to my laws, if you keep my commandments and put them into practice,
4 I shall give you the rain you need at the right time; the soil will yield its produce and the trees of the countryside their fruit;
5 you will thresh until vintage time and gather grapes until sowing time. You will eat your fill of bread and live secure in your land.
6 "I shall give peace in the land, and you will go to sleep with no one to frighten you. I shall rid the land of beasts of prey. The sword will not pass through your land.
7 You will pursue your enemies and they will fall before your sword;
8 five of you pursuing a hundred of them, one hundred pursuing ten thousand; and your enemies will fall before your sword.
9 "I shall turn towards you, I shall make you fertile and make your numbers grow, and I shall uphold my covenant with you.
10 "Having eaten all you need of last year's harvest, you will throw out the old to make room for the new.
11 "I shall fix my home among you and never reject you.
12 I shall live among you; I shall be your God and you will be my people,
13 I, the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt so that you should be their slaves no longer, and who broke the bonds of your yoke and made you walk with head held high.

14 "But if you will not listen to me and do not put all these commandments into practice,
15 if you reject my laws and detest my customs, and you break my covenant by not putting all my commandments into practice,
16 this is how I shall treat you: "I shall subject you to terror, consumption and fever, making you dim of sight and short of breath. You will sow your seed in vain, for your
17 I shall turn against you and you will be defeated by your enemies. Your foes will have the mastery over you, and you will flee when no one is pursuing you.

37 You will be powerless to stand up to your enemies; 38 you will perish among the nations, and the land of your enemies will swallow you up.
39 Those of you who survive will pine away in their guilt in the countries of their enemies and, bearing the guilt of their ancestors too, will pine away like them.
40 "Then they shall admit their guilt and that of their ancestors and their infidelities against me, and further, their setting themselves against me.
41 "I in my turn will go against them and bring them into the land of their enemies. Then their uncircumcised hearts will grow humble and then they will accept the punishment for their guilt.
42 I shall remember my covenant with Jacob, I shall remember my covenant with Isaac and my covenant with Abraham; and I shall remember the country too.
43 "Abandoned, the country will keep its Sabbaths, as it lies deserted in their absence, and they will have to accept the punishment for their guilt, since they detested my customs and rejected my laws.
44 "Yet, in spite of all this, when they are in the land of their enemies, I shall not so utterly reject or detest them as to destroy them completely and break my covenant with them; for I am the Lord their God.
45 For their sake I shall remember the covenant I made with those first generations that I brought out of Egypt while other nations watched, so that I should be their God, I, the Lord."'}

THURSDAY

First Reading From the Book of Numbers (Num. 3:1-13; 8:5-11)

1 These were the descendants of Aaron and Moses, at the time when the Lord spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai.
2 These were the names of Aaron's sons: Nadab the eldest, then Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.
3 Such were the names of Aaron's sons, priests anointed and invested with the powers of the priesthood.
4 Nadab and Abihu died in the Lord's presence, in the desert of Sinai, when they offered unauthorised fire before the Lord. They left no children and so it fell to Eleazar and Ithamar to exercise the priesthood under their father Aaron.
5 The Lord spoke to Moses and said:
6 'Muster the tribe of Levi and put it at the disposal of the priest Aaron: they must be at his service.
7 They will undertake the duties incumbent on him and the whole community before the Tent of Meeting, in serving the Dwelling,
8 and they will be in charge of all the furnishings of the
Tent of Meeting and undertake the duties incumbent on the Israelites in serving the Dwelling.

9 You will present the Levites to Aaron and his sons as men dedicated; they will be given to him by the Israelites.

10 'You will register Aaron and his sons, who will carry out their priestly duty. But any unauthorised person who comes near must be put to death.'

11 The Lord spoke to Moses and said:

12 'Look, I myself have chosen the Levites from the Israelites instead of all the first-born, those who emerge first from the womb in Israel; the Levites therefore belong to me.

13 For every first-born belongs to me. On the day when I struck down all the first-born in Egypt, I consecrated all the first-born in Israel, human and animal, to be my own. They are mine, the Lord's.'

5 The Lord spoke to Moses and said,

6 'Separate the Levites from the Israelites and purify them.

7 This is how you must purify them: you will sprinkle them with purifying water, and they will shave their bodies all over and wash their clothes. They will then be clean.

8 They will then take a young bull, with the accompanying cereal offering of fine flour mixed with oil, and you will take a second young bull for a sacrifice for sin.

9 You will then bring the Levites in front of the Tent of Meeting, and assemble the whole community of Israelites.

10 Once you have brought the Levites before the Lord, the Israelites will lay their hands on them.
11 Aaron will then offer the Levites, making the gesture of offering before the Lord on behalf of the Israelites, admitting them to the Lord's service.

FRIDAY

First Reading From the Book of Numbers (Num. 9:15-23; 10:10.33-36)

15 On the day the Dwelling was erected, the cloud covered the Dwelling, the Tent of the Testimony. From nightfall until morning it remained over the Dwelling looking like fire.
16 So the cloud covered it all the time, and at night it looked like fire.
17 Whenever the cloud rose from the Tent, the Israelites broke camp, and wherever the cloud halted, there the Israelites pitched camp.
18 At the Lord's order, the Israelites set out and, at the Lord's order, the Israelites pitched camp. They remained in camp for as long as the cloud rested on the Dwelling.
19 If the cloud stayed for many days on the Dwelling, the Israelites performed their duty to the Lord and did not set out.
20 But if the cloud happened to stay for only a few days on the Dwelling, just as they had pitched camp at the Lord's order, at the Lord's order they set out.
If the cloud happened to remain only from evening to morning, they set out when it lifted the next morning. Or, if it stayed for a whole day and night, they set out only when it lifted.

Sometimes it stayed there for two days, a month, or a longer time; however long the cloud rested on the Dwelling, the Israelites remained in camp, and when it lifted they set out.

At the Lord's order they pitched camp, and at the Lord's order they set out. They performed their duty to the Lord, as the Lord had ordered through Moses.

At your festivals, solemnities and new-moon feasts, you will sound the trumpets over your burnt offerings and communion sacrifices, so that they recall you to the remembrance of your God. I am the Lord your God.'

They set out from the Lord's mountain and travelled for three days, while the ark of the covenant of the Lord preceded them on the three-day journey, searching out a place for them to halt.

In the daytime, the Lord's cloud was over them, once they had broken camp.

Whenever the ark set out, Moses would say: Rise, the Lord, may your enemies be scattered and those who hate you flee at your approach!

And when it halted, he would say: Come back, the Lord, to the countless thousands of Israel!
SATURDAY

First Reading From the Book of Numbers (Num. 11:4-6.10-33)

4 The rabble who had joined the people were feeling the pangs of hunger, and the Israelites began to weep again. `Who will give us meat to eat?' they said.
5 `Think of the fish we used to eat free in Egypt, the cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions and garlic!
6 But now we are withering away; there is nothing wherever we look except this manna!'

10 Moses heard the people weeping, each family at the door of its tent. The Lord's anger was greatly aroused; Moses too found it disgraceful,
11 and he said to the Lord: `Why do you treat your servant so badly? In what respect have I failed to win your favour, for you to lay the burden of all these people on me?
12 Was it I who conceived all these people, was I their father, for you to say to me, "Carry them in your arms, like a foster-father carrying an unweaned child, to the country which I swore to give their fathers"?
13 Where am I to find meat to give all these people, pesterling me with their tears and saying, "Give us meat to eat"?
14 I cannot carry all these people on my own; the weight is
too much for me.
15 If this is how you mean to treat me, please kill me outright! If only I could win your favour and be spared the sight of my misery!
16 The Lord said to Moses, `Collect me seventy of the elders of Israel, men you know to be the people's elders and scribes. Bring them to the Tent of Meeting, and let them stand beside you there.
17 I shall come down and talk to you there and shall take some of the spirit which is on you and put it on them. Then they will bear the burden of the people with you, and you will no longer have to bear it on your own.
18 `And say to the people, "Purify yourselves for tomorrow and you will have meat to eat, since you have wept in the Lord's hearing, saying: Who will give us meat to eat? How happy we were in Egypt! Very well, the Lord will give you meat to eat.
19 You will eat it not for one day, or two, or five, or ten or twenty,
20 but for a whole month, until it comes out of your nostrils and sickens you, since you have rejected the Lord who is among you, and have wept before him saying: Why did we ever leave Egypt?'
21 Moses said, `The people round me number six hundred thousand foot soldiers, and you say, "I shall give them meat to eat for a whole month"!
22 If all the flocks and herds were slaughtered, would that be enough for them? If all the fish in the seas were collected, would that be enough for them?"
The Lord said to Moses, 'Is the arm of the Lord so short? You shall see whether the promise I have made to you comes true or not.'

Moses went out and told the people what the Lord had said. Then he collected seventy of the people's elders and stationed them round the Tent.

The Lord descended in the cloud. He spoke to him and took some of the spirit that was on him and put it on the seventy elders. When the spirit came on them they prophesied-but only once.

Two men had stayed back in the camp; one was called Eldad and the other Medad. The spirit came down on them; though they had not gone to the Tent, their names were enrolled among the rest. These began to prophesy in the camp.

A young man ran to tell Moses this. 'Look,' he said, 'Eldad and Medad are prophesying in the camp.'

Joshua son of Nun, who had served Moses since he was a boy, spoke up and said, 'My lord Moses, stop them!'

Moses replied, 'Are you jealous on my account? If only all the Lord's people were prophets, and the Lord had given them his spirit!'

Moses then went back to the camp with the elders of Israel.

A wind, sent by the Lord, started blowing from the sea bringing quails which it deposited on the camp. They lay for a distance of a day's march either side of the camp, two cubits thick on the ground.

The people were up all that day and night and all the
next day collecting quails: the least gathered by anyone was ten homer; then they spread them out round the camp.

33 The meat was still between their teeth, not even chewed, when the Lord's anger was aroused by the people. The Lord struck them with a very great plague.

FIFTH WEEK OF LENT

SUNDAY

First Reading From the Book of Numbers (Num. 12:1-15)

1 Miriam, and Aaron too, criticised Moses over the Cushite woman he had married. He had indeed married a Cushite woman.
2 They said, `Is Moses the only one through whom the Lord has spoken? Has he not spoken through us too?' The Lord heard this.
3 Now Moses was extremely humble, the humblest man on earth.
4 Suddenly the Lord said to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, `Come out, all three of you, to the Tent of Meeting.' They went, all three of them,
5 and the Lord descended in a pillar of cloud and stood at the entrance of the Tent. He called Aaron and Miriam and they both came forward.
6 The Lord said: Listen to my words! if there is a prophet
among you, I reveal myself to him in a vision, I speak to him in a dream.
7 Not so with my servant Moses; to him my whole household is entrusted;
8 to him I speak face to face, plainly and not in riddles, and he sees the Lord's form. How, then, could you dare to criticise my servant Moses?
9 The Lord's anger was aroused by them. He went away,
10 and as soon as the cloud left the Tent, there was Miriam covered with a virulent skin-disease, white as snow! Aaron turned to look at her and saw that she had contracted a virulent skin-disease.
11 Aaron said to Moses: `Oh, my Lord, please do not punish us for the sin we have been foolish enough to commit.
12 Do not let her be like some monster with its flesh half eaten away when it leaves its mother's womb!'
13 Moses pleaded with the Lord. `O God,' he said, `I beg you, please heal her!'
14 The Lord then said to Moses, `If her father had done no more than spit in her face, would she not be unclean for seven days? Have her shut out of the camp for seven days, and then have her brought in again.'
15 Miriam was shut out of the camp for seven days. The people did not set out until she returned.
16 Then the people moved on from Hazereth and pitched camp in the desert of Paran.

1 The Lord spoke to Moses and said,
2 `Send out men, one from each tribe, to reconnoitre the land of Canaan which I am giving the Israelites. Each of them is to be a leading man of the tribe.'
3 At the Lord's order, Moses sent them from the desert of Paran. All of them were leading men of Israel.

17 Moses sent them to reconnoitre the land of Canaan, `Go up into the Negeb,' he said, `then go up into the highlands.
18 See what sort of country it is, and what sort of people the inhabitants are, whether they are strong or weak, few or many,
19 what sort of land they live on, whether it is good or poor; what sort of towns they live in, whether they are open or fortified;
20 what sort of land it is, fertile or barren, wooded or open. Be bold, and bring back some of the country's produce.' It was the season for early grapes.
21 They went up and reconnoitred the country from the desert of Zin to Rehob, the Pass of Hamath.
22 They went up by way of the Negeb as far as Hebron, where Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai, the Anakim, lived. (Hebron was founded seven years before Tanis in Egypt.)
23 Reaching the Vale of Eshcol, there they lopped off a vine branch with a cluster of grapes, which two of them carried away on a pole, as well as pomegranates and figs.
24 This place was called the Vale of Eshcol after the cluster which the Israelites cut there.
25 After forty days they returned from reconnoitring the country.
26 Making their way to Moses, Aaron and the whole community of Israel, in the desert of Paran, at Kadesh, they made their report to them and the whole community, and displayed the country's produce.
27 This was the report they gave: 'We made our way into the country where you sent us. It does indeed flow with milk and honey; here is what it produces.
28 At the same time, its inhabitants are a powerful people; the towns are fortified and very big; yes, and we saw the Anakim there.
29 The Amalekites occupy the Negeb area, the Hittites, Jebusites and Amorites the highlands, and the Canaanites the sea coast and the banks of the Jordan.'
30 Caleb called the people round Moses to silence and then said, 'We must march in immediately and take it; we are certainly able to conquer it.'
31 But the men who had been with him said, 'We cannot attack these people; they are stronger than we are.'
32 And they began disparaging to the Israelites the country they had reconnoitred, saying, 'The country we have been to reconnoitre is a country that devours its inhabitants. All the people we saw there were of enormous size.
We saw giants there too (the Anakim, descended from the Giants). We felt like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.'

TUESDAY

First Reading From the Book of Numbers (Num. 14:1-25)

1 The whole community then cried out in dismay, and the people wept all that night.
2 All the Israelites muttered at Moses and Aaron, and the whole community said to them, 'Would to God we had died in Egypt, or even that we had died in this desert!
3 Why has the Lord brought us to this country, for us to perish by the sword and our wives and children to be seized as booty? Should we not do better to go back to Egypt?'
4 And they said to one another, 'Let us appoint a leader and go back to Egypt.'
5 At this, Moses and Aaron threw themselves on their faces in front of the whole assembled community of Israelites, while Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, two of the men who had reconnoitred the country, tore their clothes
6 and addressed the whole community of Israelites as follows, 'The country we went to reconnoitre is a good
country, an excellent country.
8 If the Lord is pleased with us, he will lead us into this country and give it to us. It is a country flowing with milk and honey.
9 But do not rebel against the Lord or be afraid of the people of the country, for we shall gobble them up. Their protecting shade has deserted them, while we have the Lord on our side. Do not be afraid of them.
10 The whole community was talking of stoning them, when the glory of the Lord appeared to all the Israelites, inside the Tent of Meeting,
11 and the Lord said to Moses: ‘How much longer will these people treat me with contempt? How much longer will they refuse to trust me, in spite of all the signs I have displayed among them?
12 I shall strike them with pestilence and disown them. And of you I shall make a new nation, greater and mightier than they are.’
13 Moses said to the Lord: ‘Suppose the Egyptians hear about this—for by your power you brought these people out of their country—
14 and tell the people living in this country. They have heard that you, the Lord, are with this people, and that you, the Lord, show yourself to them face to face; that your cloud stands over them and that you go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.
15 If you kill this people now as though it were one man, then the nations who have heard about you will say,
16 "The Lord was not able to bring this people into the
country which he had sworn to give them, and so he has slaughtered them in the desert."

17 No, my Lord! Now is the time to assert your power as you promised when you said, earlier,

18 "the Lord, slow to anger and rich in faithful love, forgiving faults and transgression, and yet letting nothing go unchecked, punishing the parents' guilt in the children to the third and fourth generation."

19 In your most faithful love, please forgive this people's guilt, as you have done from Egypt until now.'

20 The Lord said, 'I forgive them as you ask.

21 But-as I live, and as the glory of the Lord fills the whole world-

22 of all these people who have seen my glory and the signs that I worked in Egypt and in the desert, who have put me to the test ten times already and not obeyed my voice,

23 not one shall see the country which I promised to give their ancestors. Not one of those who have treated me contumeliously will see it.

24 However, since my servant Caleb is of another spirit and since he has obeyed me completely, I shall bring him into the country where he has been, and his descendants will own it

25 (the Amalekites and Canaanites occupy the plain). Tomorrow you will turn about and go back into the desert, in the direction of the Sea of Suph.'
1 Now Korah son of Izhar, son of Kohath the Levite, and the Reubenites Dathan and Abiram sons of Eliab, and On son of Peleth were proud
2 and rebelled against Moses with two hundred and fifty Israelites who were leaders of the community, prominent at the solemn feasts, men of repute.
3 These banded together against Moses and Aaron and said to them, `You take too much on yourselves! The whole community, all its members, are consecrated, and the Lord lives among them. Why set yourselves higher than the Lord's community?'
4 On hearing this, Moses threw himself on his face.
5 Then he said to Korah and all in his party, `Tomorrow morning the Lord will reveal who is his, who the consecrated man whom he will allow to approach him. The one he allows to approach is the one whom he has chosen.
6 This is what you must do: take the censers of Korah and all in his party,
7 put fire in them and put incense in them before the Lord tomorrow, and the one whom the Lord chooses will be the consecrated man. Levites, you take too much on yourselves!'
8 Moses then said to Korah, `Now listen, you Levites!'
9 Is it not enough for you that the God of Israel has singled you out of the community of Israel, and called you to be near him, to serve in the Lord's Dwelling and to represent the community by officiating on its behalf?
10 He has called you to be near him, you and all your brother Levites with you, and now you want to be priests as well!
11 For which reason, you and all in your party have banded together against the Lord himself: for what is Aaron, that you should mutter against him?'

16 Moses said to Korah, `You and all your party, come before the Lord tomorrow, you and they, and Aaron too. 17 Each will take his censer, put incense in it, and bring his censer before the Lord-two hundred and fifty censers. You and Aaron too will each bring his censer.'
18 Each of them took his censer, put fire in it and placed incense on it, and stood at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting with Moses and Aaron.
19 Then, Korah having assembled the whole community to confront them at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, the glory of the Lord appeared to the whole community.
20 The Lord then spoke to Moses and Aaron. He said, 21 `Get away from this community. I am going to destroy them here and now.'
22 They threw themselves on their faces and cried out, `O God, God of the spirits that give life to every living thing, will you be angry with the whole community because one man has sinned?'
23 The Lord then said to Moses,
24 `Speak to the community and say, "Stand well clear of
Korah's tent." '

28 Moses said, `This is how you will know that the Lord
himself has sent me to perform all these tasks and that I am
not doing them of my own accord.
29 If these people die a natural death such as people
commonly die, then the Lord has not sent me.
30 But if the Lord does something utterly new, if the earth
should open its mouth and swallow them and all their
belongings, so that they go down alive to Sheol, then you
will know that they held the Lord in contempt.'
31 The moment he finished saying all this, the ground split
apart under their feet,
32 the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, their
families, all Korah's people and all their property.
33 They went down alive to Sheol with all their
belongings. The earth closed over them and they
disappeared in the middle of the community.
34 At their cries, all the Israelites round them took to their
heels, saying, `We do not want the earth to swallow us too!'
35 Fire then shot out from the Lord and consumed the two
hundred and fifty men offering incense.

THURSDAY
1 The Israelites, the whole community, arrived in the first month at the desert of Zin. The people settled at Kadesh. There Miriam died and was buried.
2 There was no water for the community, so they banded together against Moses and Aaron.
3 The people laid the blame on Moses. 'We would rather have died', they said, 'as our brothers died before the Lord!
4 Why have you brought the Lord's community into this desert, for us and our livestock to die here?
5 Why did you lead us out of Egypt, only to bring us to this wretched place? It is a place unfit for sowing, it has no figs, no vines, no pomegranates, and there is not even water to drink!'
6 Leaving the assembly, Moses and Aaron went to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting. They threw themselves on their faces, and the glory of the Lord appeared to them.
7 The Lord then spoke to Moses and said,
8 'Take the branch and call the community together, you and your brother Aaron. Then, in full view of them, order this rock to release its water. You will release water from the rock for them and provide drink for the community and their livestock.'
9 Moses took up the branch from before the Lord, as he had directed him.
10 Moses and Aaron then called the assembly together in front of the rock. He then said to them, 'Listen now, you
rebels. Shall we make water gush from this rock for you?"

11 Moses then raised his hand and struck the rock twice with the branch; water gushed out in abundance, and the community and their livestock drank.

12 The Lord then said to Moses and Aaron, `Because you did not believe that I could assert my holiness before the Israelites' eyes, you will not lead this assembly into the country which I am giving them.'

13 These were the Waters of Meribah, where the Israelites laid the blame on the Lord and where, by their means, he asserted his holiness.

4 They left Mount Hor by the road to the Sea of Suph, to skirt round Edom. On the way the people lost patience.

5 They spoke against God and against Moses, `Why did you bring us out of Egypt to die in the desert? For there is neither food nor water here; we are sick of this meagre diet.'

6 At this, God sent fiery serpents among the people; their bite brought death to many in Israel.

7 The people came and said to Moses, `We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you. Intercede for us with the Lord to save us from these serpents.' Moses interceded for the people,

8 and the Lord replied, `Make a fiery serpent and raise it as a standard. Anyone who is bitten and looks at it will survive.'

9 Moses then made a serpent out of bronze and raised it as a standard, and anyone who was bitten by a serpent and
looked at the bronze serpent survived.

FRIDAY

First Reading From the Book of Numbers (Num. 22:1-8.20-35)

1 The Israelites then set out and pitched their camp in the Plains of Moab, beyond the Jordan opposite Jericho.
2 Balak son of Zippor saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites,
3 and Moab was terrified of the people, because there were so many of them. Moab was afraid of the Israelites;
4 he said to the elders of Midian, `This horde will soon have cropped everything round us as closely as an ox crops grass in the countryside.' Now Balak son of Zippor was king of Moab at the time.
5 He sent messengers to summon Balaam son of Beor, at Pethor on the River, in the territory of the Amawites, saying, `Look, a people coming from Egypt has overrun the whole countryside; they have halted at my very door.
6 I beg you come and curse this people for me, for they are stronger than I am. We may then be able to defeat them and drive them out of the country. For this I know: anyone you bless is blessed, anyone you curse is accursed.'
7 The elders of Moab and the elders of Midian set out, taking the fee for the divination with them. They found
Balaam and gave him Balak's message.
8 He said to them, 'Stay the night here, and I will answer as the Lord directs me.' So the chiefs of Moab stayed with Balaam.

20 God came to Balaam during the night and said to him, 'Have not these men come to summon you? Get up, go with them, but do only what I tell you to do.'
21 Balaam got up and saddled his donkey and set out with the chiefs of Moab.
22 His going kindled the Lord's anger, and the angel of the Lord took his stand on the road to bar his way. Balaam was riding his donkey and his two servants were with him.
23 Now the donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand, and she turned off the road into the open country. Balaam then struck the donkey to turn her back onto the road.
24 The angel of the Lord then moved and stood in a place so narrow that there was no room to pass either to right or left.
25 The donkey saw the angel of the Lord and scraped against the wall, scraping Balaam's foot against it, so he struck her again.
26 The angel of the Lord then moved and stood in a place so narrow that there was no room to pass either to right or left.
27 When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, she lay down under Balaam. Balaam flew into a rage and struck the donkey with his stick.
28 The Lord then gave the donkey the power to talk, and she said to Balaam, `What harm have I done you, for you to strike me three times like this?'
29 Balaam answered the donkey, `Because you have been making a fool of me! If I had been carrying a sword, I should have killed you by now.'
30 The donkey said to Balaam, `Am I not your donkey, and have I not been your mount all your life? Have I ever behaved like this with you before?' `No,' he replied.
31 The Lord then opened Balaam's eyes and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand; and he bowed his head and threw himself on his face.
32 And the angel of the Lord said to him, `Why did you strike your donkey three times like that? I myself had come to bar your way; while I am here your road is blocked.
33 The donkey saw me and turned aside because of me three times. You are lucky she did turn aside, or I should have killed you by now, though I would have spared her.'
34 Balaam said to the angel of the Lord, `I have sinned. I did not know you were standing in the road to stop me. But if what I am doing displeases you, I will go home again.'
35 The angel of the Lord said to Balaam, `Go with these men, but say only what I tell you to say.' So Balaam went on with the chiefs sent by Balak.

SATURDAY
1 Balaam then saw that it pleased the Lord to bless Israel. He did not go as before to seek omens but turned towards the desert.

2 Raising his eyes Balaam saw Israel settled tribe by tribe; the spirit of God came on him.

3 and he declaimed his poem, as follows: The prophecy of Balaam son of Beor, the prophecy of the man with far-seeing eyes,

4 the prophecy of one who hears the words of God. He sees what Shaddai makes him see, receives the divine answer, and his eyes are opened.

5 How fair your tents are, Jacob, how fair your dwellings, Israel,

6 like valleys that stretch afar, like gardens by the banks of a river, like aloes planted by the Lord, like cedars beside the waters!

7 A hero arises from their stock, he reigns over countless peoples. His king is greater than Agag, and his kingship held in honour.

8 God has brought him out of Egypt, is like the wild ox's horns to him. He devours the corpses of his enemies, breaking their bones, piercing them with his arrows.

9 He has crouched, he has lain down, like a lion, like a lioness; who dare rouse him? Blessed be those who bless you, and accursed be those who curse you!

10 Balak flew into a rage with Balaam. He struck his hands
together and said to Balaam, 'I brought you to curse my enemies, and you have insisted on blessing them three times over!

11 So now go home as fast as your legs can carry you. I promised to load you with honours. The Lord himself has deprived you of them.'

12 Balaam retorted to Balak, 'Did I not tell the messengers you sent me,

13 "Even if Balak gave me his house full of gold and silver I could not go against the Lord's order and do anything of my own accord, whether for good or ill; whatever the Lord says is what I shall say"?

14 Now that I am going back to my own folk, let me warn you what this people will do to your people, in days to come.'

15 He then declaimed his poem, as follows: The prophecy of Balaam son of Beor, the prophecy of the man with far-seeing eyes,

16 the prophecy of one who hears the words of God, of one who knows the knowledge of the Most High. He sees what Shaddai makes him see, receives the divine answer, and his eyes are opened.

17 I see him—but not in the present. I perceive him—but not close at hand: a star is emerging from Jacob, a sceptre is rising from Israel, to strike the brow of Moab, the skulls of all the children of Seth.

18 Edom too will be a conquered land, Seir too will be a conquered land, when Israel exerts his strength,

19 when Jacob tramples on his enemies and destroys the
First Reading From the Prophecy of Jeremiah (Jer. 22:1-8; 23:1-8)

1 The Lord said this, `Go down to the palace of the king of Judah and there say this word,
2 "Listen to the word of the Lord, king of Judah now occupying the throne of David, you, your officials and your people who go through these gates.
3 The Lord says this: Act uprightly and justly; rescue from the hands of the oppressor anyone who has been wronged, do not exploit or ill-treat the stranger, the orphan, the widow; shed no innocent blood in this place.
4 For if you are scrupulous in obeying this command, then kings occupying the throne of David will continue to make their entry through the gates of this palace riding in chariots or on horseback, they, their officials and their people.
5 But if you do not listen to these words, then I swear by myself, the Lord declares, this palace shall become a ruin!
6 "Yes, this is what the Lord says about the palace of the king of Judah: You are like Gilead to me, like a peak of
Lebanon. All the same, I will reduce you to a desert, to uninhabited towns.
7 I dedicate men to destroy you, each man with his weapons; they will cut down your finest cedars and throw them on the fire.
8 "And when many nations pass this city, they will say to one another: Why has the Lord treated this great city like this?

1 `Disaster for the shepherds who lose and scatter the sheep of my pasture, the Lord declares.
2 This, therefore, is what the Lord, God of Israel, says about the shepherds who shepherd my people, "You have scattered my flock, you have driven them away and have not taken care of them. Right, I shall take care of you for your misdeeds, the Lord declares!
3 But the remnant of my flock I myself shall gather from all the countries where I have driven them, and bring them back to their folds; they will be fruitful and increase in numbers.
4 For them I shall raise up shepherds to shepherd them and pasture them. No fear, no terror for them any more; not one shall be lost, the Lord declares!
5 Look, the days are coming, the Lord declares, when I shall raise an upright Branch for David; he will reign as king and be wise, doing what is just and upright in the country.
6 In his days Judah will triumph and Israel live in safety. And this is the name he will be called, `The Lord-is-our-
7 \( \text{So, look, the days are coming, the Lord declares, when people will no longer say, "As the Lord lives who brought the Israelites out of Egypt,"} \)
8 but, "As the Lord lives who led back and brought home the offspring of the House of Israel from the land of the north and all the countries to which he had driven them, to live on their own soil." \\

MONDAY

First Reading From the Prophecy of Jeremiah (Jer. 26:1-15)

1 At the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah, king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from the Lord,
2 \( \text{The Lord says this, "Stand in the court of the Temple of the Lord. To all the people from the towns of Judah who come to worship in the Temple of the Lord you will say everything I have ordered you to say, not omitting one syllable.} \)
3 Perhaps they will listen and each turn from his evil way: if so, I shall relent and not bring the disaster on them which I intend because of their misdeeds."
4 Say to them, "The Lord says this: If you will not listen to me and follow my Law which I have given you,
5 and pay attention to the words of my servants the
prophets whom I have never tired of sending to you, although you never have paid attention,
6 I shall treat this Temple as I treated Shiloh, and make this city a curse for all the nations of the world."'
7 The priests and prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah say these words in the Temple of the Lord.
8 When Jeremiah had finished saying everything that the Lord had ordered him to say to all the people, the priests and prophets and all the people seized hold of him and said, `You will die for this!
9 Why have you made this prophecy in the Lord's name, "This Temple will become like Shiloh, and this city become an uninhabited ruin"? And the people all crowded in on Jeremiah in the Temple of the Lord.
10 Hearing of this, the chief men of Judah came up from the royal palace to the Temple of the Lord and took their seats at the entry of the New Gate of the Temple of the Lord.
11 The priests and prophets then said to the chief men and all the people, `This man deserves to die, since he has prophesied against this city, as you have heard with your own ears.'
12 Jeremiah, however, replied to all the chief men and all the people as follows, `The Lord himself sent me to prophesy against this Temple and this city all the things you have heard.
13 So now amend your behaviour and actions, listen to the voice of the Lord your God, and the Lord will relent about the disaster that he has decreed for you.
14 For myself, I am, as you see, in your hands. Do whatever you please or think right with me. 
15 But be sure of this, that if you put me to death, you will be bringing innocent blood on yourselves, on this city and on its inhabitants, since the Lord has truly sent me to you to say all this for you to hear.

TUESDAY

First Reading From the Prophecy of Jeremiah (Jer. 8:13-23; 9:1-8)

13 I shall put an end to them, the Lord declares, no more grapes on the vine, no more figs on the fig tree only withered leaves: I have found them people to trample on them! 
14 Why are we sitting still? Mobilise! Take to the fortified towns and there fall silent, since the Lord our God means to silence us by giving us poisoned water to drink because we have sinned against him. 
15 We are hoping for peace- no good came of it! For the time of healing- nothing but terror! 
16 From Dan you can hear the snorting of his horses; at the neighing of his stallions the whole country quakes; they are coming to devour the country and its contents, the town and those that live in it. 
17 Yes, now I am sending you poisonous snakes against
which no charm exists; and they will bite you, the Lord declares.
18 Incurable sorrow overtakes me, my heart fails me.
19 Hark, from the daughter of my people the cry for help, ringing far and wide throughout the land! `Is the Lord no longer in Zion, her King no longer there?' (Why have they provoked me with their idols, with their futile foreign gods?)
20 `Harvest is over, summer at an end, and we have not been saved!'
21 The wound of the daughter of my people wounds me too, all looks dark to me, terror grips me.
22 Is there no balm in Gilead any more? Is no doctor there? Then why is there no progress in the cure of the daughter of my people?
23 Who will turn my head into a fountain, and my eyes into a spring of tears, that I can weep day and night over the slain of the daughter of my people?

1 Who will find me a wayfarer's shelter in the desert, for me to quit my people, and leave them far behind? For all of them are adulterers, a conspiracy of traitors.
2 They bend their tongues like a bow; not truth but falsehood holds sway in the land; yes, they go from crime to crime, but me they do not know, the Lord declares.
3 Let each be on his guard against his friend; do not trust a brother, for every brother aims but to supplant, and every friend is a peddler of slander.
4 Each one cheats his friend, never telling the truth; they
have trained their tongues to lie and devote all their energies to doing wrong.
5 You live in a world of bad faith! Out of bad faith, they refuse to know me, the Lord declares.
6 And, so, the Lord God of Hosts declares, now I shall purge them and test them, no other way to treat the daughter of my people!
7 Their tongue is a deadly arrow, their words are in bad faith; with his mouth each wishes his neighbour peace, while in his heart plotting a trap for him.
8 Shall I fail to punish them for this, the Lord demands, or on such a nation fail to exact vengeance?

WEDNESDAY

First Reading From the Prophecy of Jeremiah (Jer. 11:18-12:13)

18 The Lord informed me and I knew it; you then revealed their scheming to me.
19 I for my part was like a trustful lamb being led to the slaughterhouse, not knowing the schemes they were plotting against me, `Let us destroy the tree in its strength, let us cut him off from the land of the living, so that his name may no longer be remembered!'
20 The Lord God of Hosts, whose judgement is upright, tester of motives and thoughts, I shall see your vengeance
on them, for I have revealed my cause to you.  
21 Against the people of Anathoth who are determined to kill me and say to me, `Do not prophesy in the name of the Lord or you will die at our hands!'  
22 The Lord says this, `I am about to punish them. Their young people will die by the sword, their sons and daughters by famine.  
23 Not one will be left when I bring disaster on the people of Anathoth, when the year for punishing them comes.'

1 Your uprightness is too great, O Lord, for me to dispute with you. But I should like to discuss some points of justice with you: Why is it that the way of the wicked prospers? Why do all treacherous people thrive?  
2 You plant them, they take root, they flourish, yes, and bear fruit. You are on their lips, yet far from their heart.  
3 You know me, O Lord, you see me, you probe my heart, which is close to yours. Drag them off like sheep for the slaughterhouse, reserve them for the day of butchery.  
4 (How long will the land be in mourning, and the grass wither all over the countryside? The animals and birds are dying as a result of the wickedness of the inhabitants.) For they say, `God does not see our fate.'  
5 `If you find it exhausting to race against me on foot, how will you compete against horses? In a country at peace you feel secure, but how will you fare in the thickets of the Jordan?  
6 `For even your brothers and your own family will betray you. They will pursue you in full cry. Put no faith in them
when they speak you fair!
7 I have abandoned my house, left my heritage, I have delivered what I dearly loved into the clutches of its enemies.
8 To me, my heritage has behaved like a lion in the forest, it roared at me ferociously: so I now hate it.
9 I see my heritage as a brightly-coloured bird of prey attacked by birds of prey on every side! Go, assemble all the wild animals, make them come and dine!
10 Many shepherds have laid my vineyard waste, have trampled over my plot of land, the plot of land which was my joy, reducing my favourite estate to a deserted wilderness.
11 They have made it a waste; wasted, it mourns before me. The whole country has been devastated and no one takes it to heart.
12 The devastators have arrived on all the bare heights of the desert (for the Lord wields a devouring sword); from one end of the country to the other, there is no peace for any living thing.
13 Wheat they have sown, thorns they reap: they have worn themselves out, to no profit. They are disappointed in their harvests, because of the Lord's burning anger.

THURSDAY

First Reading From the Prophecy of Jeremiah (Jer. 15:10-
10 A disaster for me, mother, that you bore me to be a man of strife and dissension for the whole country. I neither lend nor borrow, yet all of them curse me.
11 Have I not genuinely done my best to serve you, O Lord? Have I not interceded with you in time of disaster and distress!
12 'Can iron break the iron of the north and the bronze?
13 Your wealth and your treasures I shall hand over to plunder, without repayment, because of all your sins, throughout your territory.
14 I shall enslave you to your enemies in a country which you do not know, for my anger has kindled a fire that will burn you up.'
15 O Lord, you know! Remember me, take care of me, and avenge me on my persecutors. However long your anger endures, do not snatch me away. Realise that I suffer insult for your sake.
16 When your words came, I devoured them: your word was my delight and the joy of my heart; for I was called by your Name, O Lord God of Hosts.
17 I never sat in the company of scoffers amusing myself; with your hands on me I held myself aloof, since you had filled me with indignation.
18 Why is my suffering continual, my wound incurable, refusing to be healed? Truly, for me you are a deceptive stream with uncertain waters!
19 To which the Lord replied, 'If you repent, I shall restore
you to plead before me. If you distinguish between the precious and the base, you shall be as my own mouth. They will come back to you, but you must not go back to them.

20 As far as these people are concerned, I shall make you a fortified wall of bronze. They will fight against you but will not overcome you, because I am with you to save you and rescue you, the Lord declares.

21 I shall rescue you from the clutches of the wicked and redeem you from the grasp of the violent.'

TRIDUUM OF THE LORD
GOOD FRIDAY

First Reading From the Prophecy of Jeremiah (Jer. 16:1-15)

1 The word of the Lord was addressed to me as follows:
2 `You are not to marry or have sons and daughters in this place.
3 For the Lord says this regarding the sons and daughters to be born in this place, about the mothers who give birth to them, and about the fathers who beget them in this land,
4 "They will die of deadly diseases, unlamented and unburied; they will be like dung spread on the ground; they will meet their end by sword and famine, and their corpses will be food for the birds of the sky and the beasts of earth."
5 `Yes, the Lord says this, "Go into no house where there is
mourn, do not go and lament or grieve with them; for I have withdrawn my peace from this people, the Lord declares, and faithful love and pity too.

6 High or low, they will die in this country, without burial or lament; there will be no gashing, no shaving of the head for them.

7 No bread will be broken for the mourner to comfort him for the dead; no cup of consolation will be offered him for his father or his mother.

8 "And do not enter a house where there is feasting, to sit with them and eat and drink.

9 For the Lord God of Hosts, the God of Israel, says this: In this place, before your eyes, in your own days, I will silence the shouts of rejoicing and mirth and the voices of bridegroom and bride.

10 "When you tell these people this and they ask you: Why has the Lord decreed such complete and total disaster for us? What have we done wrong? What sin have we committed against the Lord our God?

11 then you are to answer: It is because your ancestors abandoned me, the Lord declares, and followed other gods, and served and worshipped them. They abandoned me and did not keep my Law.

12 And you for your part have behaved even worse than your ancestors. Look, each of you follows his own stubborn and wicked inclinations, without listening to me.

13 And so, I shall eject you from this country into a country unknown to you or to your ancestors, and there you can serve other gods, day and night, for I shall show
you no more favour."
14 'Look, the days are coming, the Lord declares, when
people will no longer say, "As the Lord lives who brought
the Israelites out of Egypt!"
15 but, "As the Lord lives who brought the Israelites back
from the land of the north and all the countries to which he
had driven them." I shall bring them back to the very soil I
gave their ancestors.'

HOLY SATURDAY

First Reading From the Prophecy of Jeremiah (Jer. 20:7-18)

7 You have seduced me, O Lord, and I have let myself be
seduced; you have overpowered me: you were the stronger.
I am a laughing-stock all day long, they all make fun of
me.
8 For whenever I speak, I have to howl and proclaim,
`Violence and ruin!' For me, the Lord's word has been the
cause of insult and derision all day long.
9 I would say to myself, 'I will not think about him, I will
not speak in his name any more,' but then there seemed to
be a fire burning in my heart, imprisoned in my bones. The
effort to restrain it wearied me, I could not do it.
10 I heard so many disparaging me, `Terror on every side!
Denounce him! Let us denounce him!' All those who were
on good terms with me watched for my downfall, `Perhaps he will be seduced into error. Then we shall get the better of him and take our revenge!'

11 But the Lord is at my side like a mighty hero; my opponents will stumble, vanquished, confounded by their failure; everlasting, unforgettable disgrace will be theirs.  
12 the Lord God of Hosts, you who test the upright, observer of motives and thoughts, I shall see your vengeance on them, for I have revealed my cause to you.  
13 Sing to the Lord, praise the Lord, for he has delivered the soul of one in need from the clutches of evil doers.  
14 A curse on the day when I was born! May the day my mother bore me be unblessed!  
15 A curse on the man who brought my father the news, `A son, a boy has been born to you!' making him overjoyed.  
16 May this man be like the towns that the Lord overthrew without mercy; may he hear the warning-cry at dawn and the shout of battle at high noon,  
17 for not killing me in the womb; my mother would have been my grave and her womb pregnant for ever.  
18 Why ever did I come out of the womb to see toil and sorrow and end my days in shame?

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EASTER OCTAVE

MONDAY
1 In my earlier work, Theophilus, I dealt with everything Jesus had done and taught from the beginning
2 until the day he gave his instructions to the apostles he had chosen through the Holy Spirit, and was taken up to heaven.
3 He had shown himself alive to them after his Passion by many demonstrations: for forty days he had continued to appear to them and tell them about the kingdom of God.
4 While at table with them, he had told them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for what the Father had promised. `It is', he had said, `what you have heard me speak about:
5 John baptised with water but, not many days from now, you are going to be baptised with the Holy Spirit.'
6 Now having met together, they asked him, `Lord, has the time come for you to restore the kingdom to Israel?'
7 He replied, `It is not for you to know times or dates that the Father has decided by his own authority,
8 but you will receive the power of the Holy Spirit which will come on you, and then you will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to earth's remotest end.'
9 As he said this he was lifted up while they looked on, and a cloud took him from their sight.
10 They were still staring into the sky as he went, when suddenly two men in white were standing beside them,
11 and they said, `Why are you Galileans standing here
looking into the sky? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come back in the same way as you have seen him go to heaven.'
12 So from the Mount of Olives, as it is called, they went back to Jerusalem, a short distance away, no more than a Sabbath walk;
13 and when they reached the city they went to the upper room where they were staying; there were Peter and John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Jude son of James.
14 With one heart all these joined constantly in prayer, together with some women, including Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.
15 One day Peter stood up to speak to the brothers—there were about a hundred and twenty people in the congregation,
16 `Brothers,' he said, `the passage of scripture had to be fulfilled in which the Holy Spirit, speaking through David, foretells the fate of Judas, who acted as guide to the men who arrested Jesus—
17 after being one of our number and sharing our ministry.
18 As you know, he bought a plot of land with the money he was paid for his crime. He fell headlong and burst open, and all his entrails poured out.
19 Everybody in Jerusalem heard about it and the plot came to be called "Bloody Acre", in their language Hakeldama.
20 Now in the Book of Psalms it says: Reduce his
encampment to ruin and leave his tent unoccupied. And again: Let someone else take over his office.
21 `Out of the men who have been with us the whole time that the Lord Jesus was living with us,
22 from the time when John was baptising until the day when he was taken up from us, one must be appointed to serve with us as a witness to his resurrection.'
23 Having nominated two candidates, Joseph known as Barsabbas, whose surname was Justus, and Matthias,
24 they prayed, `Lord, you can read everyone's heart; show us therefore which of these two you have chosen
25 to take over this ministry and apostolate, which Judas abandoned to go to his proper place.'
26 They then drew lots for them, and as the lot fell to Matthias, he was listed as one of the twelve apostles.

TUESDAY

First Reading From the Acts of the Apostles (Acts. 2:1-21)

1 When Pentecost day came round, they had all met together,
2 when suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of a violent wind which filled the entire house in which they were sitting;
3 and there appeared to them tongues as of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them.
They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak different languages as the Spirit gave them power to express themselves.

Now there were devout men living in Jerusalem from every nation under heaven, and at this sound they all assembled, and each one was bewildered to hear these men speaking his own language. They were amazed and astonished. 'Surely,' they said, 'all these men speaking are Galileans? How does it happen that each of us hears them in his own native language?

Parthians, Medes and Elamites; people from Mesopotamia, Judaea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya round Cyrene; residents of Rome-Jews and proselytes alike-Cretans and Arabs, we hear them preaching in our own language about the marvels of God.'

Everyone was amazed and perplexed; they asked one another what it all meant.

Some, however, laughed it off. 'They have been drinking too much new wine,' they said.

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven and addressed them in a loud voice: 'Men of Judaea, and all you who live in Jerusalem, make no mistake about this, but listen carefully to what I say.

These men are not drunk, as you imagine; why, it is only the third hour of the day.

On the contrary, this is what the prophet was saying:
17 In the last days—the Lord declares— I shall pour out my Spirit on all humanity. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your young people shall see visions, your old people dream dreams.
18 Even on the slaves, men and women, shall I pour out my Spirit.
19 I will show portents in the sky above and signs on the earth below.
20 The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the day of the Lord comes, that great and terrible Day.
21 And all who call on the name of the Lord will be saved.

WEDNESDAY

First reading From the Acts of the Apostles (Acts. 2:22-41)

22 `Men of Israel, listen to what I am going to say: Jesus the Nazarene was a man commended to you by God by the miracles and portents and signs that God worked through him when he was among you, as you know.
23 This man, who was put into your power by the deliberate intention and foreknowledge of God, you took and had crucified and killed by men outside the Law.
24 But God raised him to life, freeing him from the pangs of Hades; for it was impossible for him to be held in its power since,
25 as David says of him: I kept the Lord before my sight always, for with him at my right hand nothing can shake me.
26 So my heart rejoiced my tongue delighted; my body, too, will rest secure,
27 for you will not abandon me to Hades or allow your holy one to see corruption.
28 You have taught me the way of life, you will fill me with joy in your presence.
29 Brothers, no one can deny that the patriarch David himself is dead and buried: his tomb is still with us.
30 But since he was a prophet, and knew that God had sworn him an oath to make one of his descendants succeed him on the throne,
31 he spoke with foreknowledge about the resurrection of the Christ: he is the one who was not abandoned to Hades, and whose body did not see corruption.
32 God raised this man Jesus to life, and of that we are all witnesses.
33 Now raised to the heights by God's right hand, he has received from the Father the Holy Spirit, who was promised, and what you see and hear is the outpouring of that Spirit.
34 For David himself never went up to heaven, but yet he said: The Lord declared to my Lord, take your seat at my right hand,
35 till I have made your enemies your footstool.
36 For this reason the whole House of Israel can be certain that the Lord and Christ whom God has made is this Jesus
37 Hearing this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, `What are we to do, brothers?'
38 `You must repent,' Peter answered, `and every one of you must be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.
39 The promise that was made is for you and your children, and for all those who are far away, for all those whom the Lord our God is calling to himself.'
40 He spoke to them for a long time using many other arguments, and he urged them, `Save yourselves from this perverse generation.'
41 They accepted what he said and were baptised. That very day about three thousand were added to their number.

THURSDAY


42 These remained faithful to the teaching of the apostles, to the brotherhood, to the breaking of bread and to the prayers.
43 And everyone was filled with awe; the apostles worked many signs and miracles.
44 And all who shared the faith owned everything in
45 they sold their goods and possessions and distributed the proceeds among themselves according to what each one needed.
46 Each day, with one heart, they regularly went to the Temple but met in their houses for the breaking of bread; they shared their food gladly and generously;
47 they praised God and were looked up to by everyone. Day by day the Lord added to their community those destined to be saved.

1 Once, when Peter and John were going up to the Temple for the prayers at the ninth hour,
2 it happened that there was a man being carried along. He was a cripple from birth; and they used to put him down every day near the Temple entrance called the Beautiful Gate so that he could beg from the people going in.
3 When this man saw Peter and John on their way into the Temple he begged from them.
4 Peter, and John too, looked straight at him and said, `Look at us.'
5 He turned to them expectantly, hoping to get something from them,
6 but Peter said, `I have neither silver nor gold, but I will give you what I have: in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, walk!'
7 Then he took him by the right hand and helped him to stand up. Instantly his feet and ankles became firm,
8 he jumped up, stood, and began to walk, and he went
with them into the Temple, walking and jumping and praising God.
9 Everyone could see him walking and praising God, 10 and they recognised him as the man who used to sit begging at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple. They were all astonished and perplexed at what had happened to him. 11 Everyone came running towards them in great excitement, to the Portico of Solomon, as it is called, where the man was still clinging to Peter and John.

FRIDAY


12 When Peter saw the people he addressed them, `Men of Israel, why are you so surprised at this? Why are you staring at us as though we had made this man walk by our own power or holiness?
13 It is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our ancestors, who has glorified his servant Jesus whom you handed over and then disowned in the presence of Pilate after he had given his verdict to release him. 14 It was you who accused the Holy and Upright One, you who demanded that a murderer should be released to you 15 while you killed the prince of life. God, however, raised him from the dead, and to that fact we are witnesses;
16 and it is the name of Jesus which, through faith in him, has brought back the strength of this man whom you see here and who is well known to you. It is faith in him that has restored this man to health, as you can all see.

17 ‘Now I know, brothers, that neither you nor your leaders had any idea what you were really doing;
18 but this was the way God carried out what he had foretold, when he said through all his prophets that his Christ would suffer.
19 Now you must repent and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out,
20 and so that the Lord may send the time of comfort. Then he will send you the Christ he has predestined, that is Jesus,
21 whom heaven must keep till the universal restoration comes which God proclaimed, speaking through his holy prophets.
22 Moses, for example, said, "From among your brothers the Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me; you will listen to whatever he tells you.
23 Anyone who refuses to listen to that prophet shall be cut off from the people."
24 In fact, all the prophets that have ever spoken, from Samuel onwards, have predicted these days.
25 ‘You are the heirs of the prophets, the heirs of the covenant God made with your ancestors when he told Abraham, "All the nations of the earth will be blessed in your descendants".
26 It was for you in the first place that God raised up his
servant and sent him to bless you as every one of you turns from his wicked ways.'

1 While they were still talking to the people the priests came up to them, accompanied by the captain of the Temple and the Sadducees.
2 They were extremely annoyed at their teaching the people the resurrection from the dead by proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus.
3 They arrested them, and, as it was already late, they kept them in prison till the next day.
4 But many of those who had listened to their message became believers; the total number of men had now risen to something like five thousand.

SATURDAY

First Reading From the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 4:5-31)

5 It happened that the next day the rulers, elders and scribes held a meeting in Jerusalem
6 with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, Jonathan, Alexander and all the members of the high-priestly families.
7 They made the prisoners stand in the middle and began to interrogate them, `By what power, and by whose name have you men done this?'
Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, addressed them, ‘Rulers of the people, and elders!

If you are questioning us today about an act of kindness to a cripple and asking us how he was healed, you must know, all of you, and the whole people of Israel, that it is by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, and God raised from the dead, by this name and by no other that this man stands before you cured.

This is the stone which you, the builders, rejected but which has become the cornerstone. Only in him is there salvation;

for of all the names in the world given to men, this is the only one by which we can be saved.'

They were astonished at the fearlessness shown by Peter and John, considering that they were uneducated laymen; and they recognised them as associates of Jesus;

but when they saw the man who had been cured standing by their side, they could find no answer.

So they ordered them to stand outside while the Sanhedrin had a private discussion.

‘What are we going to do with these men?’ they asked. ‘It is obvious to everybody in Jerusalem that a notable miracle has been worked through them, and we cannot deny it.

But to stop the whole thing spreading any further among the people, let us threaten them against ever speaking to anyone in this name again.’

So they called them in and gave them a warning on no
account to make statements or to teach in the name of Jesus.
19 But Peter and John retorted, `You must judge whether in God's eyes it is right to listen to you and not to God.
20 We cannot stop proclaiming what we have seen and heard.'
21 The court repeated the threats and then released them; they could not think of any way to punish them, since all the people were giving glory to God for what had happened.
22 The man who had been miraculously cured was over forty years old.
23 As soon as they were released they went to the community and told them everything the chief priests and elders had said to them.
24 When they heard it they lifted up their voice to God with one heart. `Master,' they prayed, `it is you who made sky and earth and sea, and everything in them;
25 it is you who said through the Holy Spirit and speaking through our ancestor David, your servant: Why this uproar among the nations, this impotent muttering of the peoples?
26 Kings on earth take up position, princes plot together against the Lord and his Anointed.
27 `This is what has come true: in this very city Herod and Pontius Pilate plotted together with the gentile nations and the peoples of Israel, against your holy servant Jesus whom you anointed,
28 to bring about the very thing that you in your strength and your wisdom had predetermined should happen.
29 And now, Lord, take note of their threats and help your servants to proclaim your message with all fearlessness, 30 by stretching out your hand to heal and to work miracles and marvels through the name of your holy servant Jesus.' 31 As they prayed, the house where they were assembled rocked. From this time they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to proclaim the word of God fearlessly.

SECOND WEEK OF EASTER

SUNDAY

First Reading From the Letter to the Colossians (Col. 3:1-17)

1 Since you have been raised up to be with Christ, you must look for the things that are above, where Christ is, sitting at God's right hand.  
2 Let your thoughts be on things above, not on the things that are on the earth,  
3 because you have died, and now the life you have is hidden with Christ in God.  
4 But when Christ is revealed-and he is your life-you, too, will be revealed with him in glory.  
5 That is why you must kill everything in you that is earthly: sexual vice, impurity, uncontrolled passion, evil desires and especially greed, which is the same thing as
worshipping a false god;
6 it is precisely these things which draw God's retribution upon those who resist.
7 And these things made up your way of life when you were living among such people,
8 but now you also must give up all these things: human anger, hot temper, malice, abusive language and dirty talk;
9 and do not lie to each other. You have stripped off your old behaviour with your old self,
10 and you have put on a new self which will progress towards true knowledge the more it is renewed in the image of its Creator;
11 and in that image there is no room for distinction between Greek and Jew, between the circumcised and uncircumcised, or between barbarian and Scythian, slave and free. There is only Christ: he is everything and he is in everything.
12 As the chosen of God, then, the holy people whom he loves, you are to be clothed in heartfelt compassion, in generosity and humility, gentleness and patience.
13 Bear with one another; forgive each other if one of you has a complaint against another. The Lord has forgiven you; now you must do the same.
14 Over all these clothes, put on love, the perfect bond.
15 And may the peace of Christ reign in your hearts, because it is for this that you were called together in one body. Always be thankful.
16 Let the Word of Christ, in all its richness, find a home with you. Teach each other, and advise each other, in all
wisdom. With gratitude in your hearts sing psalms and hymns and inspired songs to God;
17 and whatever you say or do, let it be in the name of the Lord Jesus, in thanksgiving to God the Father through him.

MONDAY


32 The whole group of believers was united, heart and soul; no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, as everything they owned was held in common.
33 The apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power, and they were all accorded great respect.
34 None of their members was ever in want, as all those who owned land or houses would sell them, and bring the money from the sale of them,
35 to present it to the apostles; it was then distributed to any who might be in need.
36 There was a Levite of Cypriot origin called Joseph whom the apostles surnamed Barnabas (which means `son of encouragement').
37 He owned a piece of land and he sold it and brought the money and presented it to the apostles.
1 There was also a man called Ananias. He and his wife, Sapphira, agreed to sell a property;
2 but with his wife's connivance he kept back part of the price and brought the rest and presented it to the apostles.
3 Peter said, `Ananias, how can Satan have so possessed you that you should lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land?
4 While you still owned the land, wasn't it yours to keep, and after you had sold it wasn't the money yours to do with as you liked? What put this scheme into your mind? You have been lying not to men, but to God.'
5 When he heard this Ananias fell down dead. And a great fear came upon everyone present.
6 The younger men got up, wrapped up the body, carried it out and buried it.
7 About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had taken place.
8 Peter challenged her, `Tell me, was this the price you sold the land for?' `Yes,' she said, `that was the price.'
9 Peter then said, `Why did you and your husband agree to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Listen! At the door are the footsteps of those who have buried your husband; they will carry you out, too.'
10 Instantly she dropped dead at his feet. When the young men came in they found she was dead, and they carried her out and buried her by the side of her husband.
11 And a great fear came upon the whole church and on all who heard it.
12 The apostles worked many signs and miracles among
the people. One in heart, they all used to meet in the
Portico of Solomon.
13 No one else dared to join them, but the people were
loud in their praise
14 and the numbers of men and women who came to
believe in the Lord increased steadily. Many signs and
wonders were worked among the people at the hands of the
apostles
15 so that the sick were even taken out into the streets and
laid on beds and sleeping-mats in the hope that at least the
shadow of Peter might fall across some of them as he went
past.
16 People even came crowding in from the towns round
about Jerusalem, bringing with them their sick and those
tormented by unclean spirits, and all of them were cured.

TUESDAY

First Reading From the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 5:17-42)

17 Then the high priest intervened with all his supporters
from the party of the Sadducees. Filled with jealousy,
18 they arrested the apostles and had them put in the public
gaol.
19 But at night the angel of the Lord opened the prison
gates and said as he led them out,
20 `Go and take up position in the Temple, and tell the
people all about this new Life.'
21 They did as they were told; they went into the Temple at dawn and began to preach.
When the high priest arrived, he and his supporters convened the Sanhedrin-this was the full Senate of Israel-and sent to the gaol for them to be brought.
22 But when the officials arrived at the prison they found they were not inside, so they went back and reported,
23 `We found the gaol securely locked and the warders on duty at the gates, but when we unlocked the door we found no one inside.'
24 When the captain of the Temple and the chief priests heard this news they wondered what could be happening.
25 Then a man arrived with fresh news. `Look!' he said, `the men you imprisoned are in the Temple. They are standing there preaching to the people.'
26 The captain went with his men and fetched them-though not by force, for they were afraid that the people might stone them.
27 When they had brought them in to face the Sanhedrin, the high priest demanded an explanation.
28 `We gave you a strong warning', he said, `not to preach in this name, and what have you done? You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and seem determined to fix the guilt for this man's death on us.'
29 In reply Peter and the apostles said, `Obedience to God comes before obedience to men;
30 it was the God of our ancestors who raised up Jesus, whom you executed by hanging on a tree.
31 By his own right hand God has now raised him up to be leader and Saviour, to give repentance and forgiveness of sins through him to Israel.
32 We are witnesses to this, we and the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.
33 This so infuriated them that they wanted to put them to death.
34 One member of the Sanhedrin, however, a Pharisee called Gamaliel, who was a teacher of the Law respected by the whole people, stood up and asked to have the men taken outside for a time.
35 Then he addressed the Sanhedrin, 'Men of Israel, be careful how you deal with these people.
36 Some time ago there arose Theudas. He claimed to be someone important, and collected about four hundred followers; but when he was killed, all his followers scattered and that was the end of them.
37 And then there was Judas the Galilean, at the time of the census, who attracted crowds of supporters; but he was killed too, and all his followers dispersed.
38 What I suggest, therefore, is that you leave these men alone and let them go. If this enterprise, this movement of theirs, is of human origin it will break up of its own accord; 39 but if it does in fact come from God you will be unable to destroy them. Take care not to find yourselves fighting against God.' His advice was accepted;
40 and they had the apostles called in, gave orders for them to be flogged, warned them not to speak in the name of Jesus and released them.
41 And so they left the presence of the Sanhedrin, glad to have had the honour of suffering humiliation for the sake of the name.
42 Every day they went on ceaselessly teaching and proclaiming the good news of Christ Jesus, both in the temple and in private houses.

WEDNESDAY


1 About this time, when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenists made a complaint against the Hebrews: in the daily distribution their own widows were being overlooked.
2 So the Twelve called a full meeting of the disciples and addressed them, 'It would not be right for us to neglect the word of God so as to give out food;
3 you, brothers, must select from among yourselves seven men of good reputation, filled with the Spirit and with wisdom, to whom we can hand over this duty.
4 We ourselves will continue to devote ourselves to prayer and to the service of the word.'
5 The whole assembly approved of this proposal and elected Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus of Antioch, a convert to Judaism.
6 They presented these to the apostles, and after prayer they laid their hands on them.
7 The word of the Lord continued to spread: the number of disciples in Jerusalem was greatly increased, and a large group of priests made their submission to the faith.
8 Stephen was filled with grace and power and began to work miracles and great signs among the people.
9 Then certain people came forward to debate with Stephen, some from Cyrene and Alexandria who were members of the synagogue called the Synagogue of Freedmen, and others from Cilicia and Asia.
10 They found they could not stand up against him because of his wisdom, and the Spirit that prompted what he said.
11 So they procured some men to say, `We heard him using blasphemous language against Moses and against God.'
12 Having turned the people against him as well as the elders and scribes, they took Stephen by surprise, and arrested him and brought him before the Sanhedrin.
13 There they put up false witnesses to say, `This man is always making speeches against this Holy Place and the Law.
14 We have heard him say that Jesus, this Nazarene, is going to destroy this Place and alter the traditions that Moses handed down to us.'
15 The members of the Sanhedrin all looked intently at Stephen, and his face appeared to them like the face of an angel.
First Reading From the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 7:1-16)

1 The high priest asked, 'Is this true?'
2 He replied, 'My brothers, my fathers, listen to what I have to say. The God of glory appeared to our ancestor Abraham, while he was in Mesopotamia before settling in Haran,
3 and said to him, "Leave your country, your kindred and your father's house for this country which I shall show you."
4 So he left Chaldaea and settled in Haran; and after his father died God made him leave that place and come to this land where you are living today.
5 God did not give him any property in this land or even a foothold, yet he promised to give it to him and after him to his descendants, childless though he was.
6 The actual words God used when he spoke to him are that his descendants would be exiles in a land not their own, where they would be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years.
7 "But I will bring judgement on the nation that enslaves them," God said, "and after this they will leave, and worship me in this place."
8 Then he made the covenant of circumcision with him: and so when his son Isaac was born Abraham circumcised him on the eighth day; similarly Isaac circumcised Jacob,
and Jacob the twelve patriarchs.

9 `The patriarchs were jealous of Joseph and sold him into slavery in Egypt. But God was with him,
10 and rescued him from all his miseries by making him so wise that he won the favour of Pharaoh king of Egypt, who made him governor of Egypt and put him in charge of his household.

11 Then a famine set in that caused much suffering throughout Egypt and Canaan, and our ancestors could find nothing to eat.

12 When Jacob heard that there were supplies in Egypt, he sent our ancestors there on a first visit;
13 and on the second Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Pharaoh came to know his origin.

14 Joseph then sent for his father Jacob and his whole family, a total of seventy-five people.

15 Jacob went down into Egypt and after he and our ancestors had died there,

16 their bodies were brought back to Shechem and buried in the tomb that Abraham had bought for money from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem.

FRIDAY

First Reading From the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 7:17-43)

17 `As the time drew near for God to fulfil the promise he had solemnly made to Abraham, our nation in Egypt
became very powerful and numerous,
18 there came to power in Egypt a new king who had never heard of Joseph.
19 He took precautions and wore down our race, forcing our ancestors to expose their babies rather than letting them live.
20 It was at this time that Moses was born, a fine child before God. He was looked after for three months in his father's house,
21 and after he had been exposed, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up like a son.
22 So Moses was taught all the wisdom of the Egyptians and became a man with power both in his speech and in his actions.
23 'At the age of forty he decided to visit his kinsmen, the Israelites.
24 When he saw one of them being ill-treated he went to his defence and rescued the man by killing the Egyptian.
25 He thought his brothers would realise that through him God would liberate them, but they did not.
26 The next day, when he came across some of them fighting, he tried to reconcile them, and said, "Friends, you are brothers; why are you hurting each other?"
27 But the man who was attacking his kinsman pushed him aside, saying, "And who appointed you to be prince over us and judge?
28 Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?"
29 Moses fled when he heard this and he went to dwell in
the land of Midian, where he fathered two sons.

30 When forty years were fulfilled, in the desert near Mount Sinai, an angel appeared to him in a flame blazing from a bush that was on fire.

31 Moses was amazed by what he saw. As he went nearer to look at it, the voice of the Lord was heard,

32 "I am the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." Moses trembled and was afraid to look.

33 The Lord said to him, "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.

34 I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt, I have heard them crying for help, and I have come down to rescue them. So come here; I am sending you into Egypt."

35 It was the same Moses that they had disowned when they said, "Who appointed you to be our leader and judge?" whom God sent to be both leader and redeemer through the angel who had appeared to him in the bush.

36 It was this man who led them out, after performing miracles and signs in Egypt and at the Red Sea and in the desert for forty years.

37 It was this Moses who told the sons of Israel, "From among your own brothers God will raise up a prophet like me."

38 When they held the assembly in the desert it was he who was with our ancestors and the angel who had spoken to him on Mount Sinai; it was he who was entrusted with words of life to hand on to us.

39 This is the man that our ancestors refused to listen to; they pushed him aside, went back to Egypt in their
40 and said to Aaron, "Make us a god to go at our head; for that Moses, the man who brought us here from Egypt, we do not know what has become of him."
41 It was then that they made the statue of a calf and offered sacrifice to the idol. They were perfectly happy with something they had made for themselves.
42 God turned away from them and abandoned them to the worship of the army of heaven, as scripture says in the book of the prophets: Did you bring me sacrifices and oblations those forty years in the desert, House of Israel?
43 No, you carried the tent of Moloch on your shoulders and the star of the god Rephan, the idols you made for yourselves to adore, and so now I am about to drive you into captivity beyond Babylon.

SATURDAY

First Reading From the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 7:44-8:3)

44 `While they were in the desert our ancestors possessed the Tent of Testimony that had been constructed according to the instructions God gave Moses, telling him to work to the design he had been shown.
45 It was handed down from one ancestor of ours to another until Joshua brought it into the country that had
belonged to the nations which were driven out by God before us. Here it stayed until the time of David.
46 He won God's favour and asked permission to find a dwelling for the House of Jacob,
47 though it was Solomon who actually built a house for God.
48 Even so the Most High does not live in a house that human hands have built: for as the prophet says:
49 With heaven my throne and earth my footstool, what house could you build me, says the Lord, what place for me to rest,
50 when all these things were made by me?
51 `You stubborn people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears. You are always resisting the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do.
52 Can you name a single prophet your ancestors never persecuted? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Upright One, and now you have become his betrayers, his murderers.
53 In spite of being given the Law through angels, you have not kept it.'
54 They were infuriated when they heard this, and ground their teeth at him.
55 But Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at God's right hand.
56 `Look! I can see heaven thrown open,' he said, `and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God.'
57 All the members of the council shouted out and stopped
their ears with their hands; then they made a concerted rush at him,
58 thrust him out of the city and stoned him. The witnesses put down their clothes at the feet of a young man called Saul.
59 As they were stoning him, Stephen said in invocation, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'
60 Then he knelt down and said aloud, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' And with these words he fell asleep.

1 Saul approved of the killing. That day a bitter persecution started against the church in Jerusalem, and everyone except the apostles scattered to the country districts of Judaea and Samaria.
2 There were some devout people, however, who buried Stephen and made great mourning for him.
3 Saul then began doing great harm to the church; he went from house to house arresting both men and women and sending them to prison.

THIRD WEEK OF EASTER

SUNDAY

First Reading From the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 8:4-25)

4 Once they had scattered, they went from place to place
preaching the good news.
5 And Philip went to a Samaritan town and proclaimed the Christ to them.
6 The people unanimously welcomed the message Philip preached, because they had heard of the miracles he worked and because they saw them for themselves.
7 For unclean spirits came shrieking out of many who were possessed, and several paralytics and cripples were cured.
8 As a result there was great rejoicing in that town.
9 Now a man called Simon had for some time been practising magic arts in the town and astounded the Samaritan people. He had given it out that he was someone momentous,
10 and everyone believed in him; eminent citizens and ordinary people alike had declared, `He is the divine power that is called Great.'
11 He had this following because for a considerable period they had been astounded by his wizardry.
12 But when they came to accept Philip's preaching of the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptised, both men and women,
13 and even Simon himself became a believer. After his baptism Simon went round constantly with Philip and was astonished when he saw the wonders and great miracles that took place.
14 When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them,
15 and they went down there and prayed for them to
receive the Holy Spirit,
16 for as yet he had not come down on any of them: they had only been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus.
17 Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.
18 When Simon saw that the Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,
19 with the words, 'Give me the same power so that anyone I lay my hands on will receive the Holy Spirit.'
20 Peter answered, 'May your silver be lost for ever, and you with it, for thinking that money could buy what God has given for nothing!
21 You have no share, no part, in this: God can see how your heart is warped.
22 Repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that this scheme of yours may be forgiven;
23 it is plain to me that you are held in the bitterness of gall and the chains of sin.'
24 Simon replied, 'Pray to the Lord for me yourselves so that none of the things you have spoken about may happen to me.'
25 Having given their testimony and proclaimed the word of the Lord, they went back to Jerusalem, preaching the good news to a number of Samaritan villages.

MONDAY
26 The angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, `Set out at
noon and go along the road that leads from Jerusalem
down to Gaza, the desert road.'
27 So he set off on his journey. Now an Ethiopian had been
on pilgrimage to Jerusalem; he was a eunuch and an officer
at the court of the kandake, or queen, of Ethiopia; he was
her chief treasurer.
28 He was now on his way home; and as he sat in his
chariot he was reading the prophet Isaiah.
29 The Spirit said to Philip, `Go up and join that chariot.'
30 When Philip ran up, he heard him reading Isaiah the
prophet and asked, `Do you understand what you are
reading?'
31 He replied, `How could I, unless I have someone to
guide me?' So he urged Philip to get in and sit by his side.
32 Now the passage of scripture he was reading was this:
Like a lamb led to the slaughter-house, like a sheep dumb
in front of its shearsers, he never opens his mouth.
33 In his humiliation fair judgement was denied him. Who
will ever talk about his descendants, since his life on earth
has been cut short?
34 The eunuch addressed Philip and said, `Tell me, is the
prophet referring to himself or someone else?'
35 Starting, therefore, with this text of scripture Philip
proceeded to explain the good news of Jesus to him.
36 Further along the road they came to some water, and the
eunuch said, `Look,
here is some water; is there anything to prevent my being baptised?'

He ordered the chariot to stop, then Philip and the eunuch both went down into the water and he baptised him.

But after they had come up out of the water again Philip was taken away by the Spirit of the Lord, and the eunuch never saw him again but went on his way rejoicing.

Philip appeared in Azotus and continued his journey, proclaiming the good news in every town as far as Caesarea.

TUESDAY


Meanwhile Saul was still breathing threats to slaughter the Lord's disciples. He went to the high priest and asked for letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, that would authorise him to arrest and take to Jerusalem any followers of the Way, men or women, that he might find.

It happened that while he was travelling to Damascus and approaching the city, suddenly a light from heaven shone all round him.

He fell to the ground, and then he heard a voice saying, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?'

`Who are you, Lord?' he asked, and the answer came, `I
am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.
6 Get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you are to do.'
7 The men travelling with Saul stood there speechless, for though they heard the voice they could see no one.
8 Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing at all, and they had to lead him into Damascus by the hand.
9 For three days he was without his sight and took neither food nor drink.
10 There was a disciple in Damascus called Ananias, and he had a vision in which the Lord said to him, `Ananias!' When he replied, `Here I am, Lord,'
11 the Lord said, `Get up and go to Straight Street and ask at the house of Judas for someone called Saul, who comes from Tarsus. At this moment he is praying,
12 and has seen a man called Ananias coming in and laying hands on him to give him back his sight.'
13 But in response, Ananias said, `Lord, I have heard from many people about this man and all the harm he has been doing to your holy people in Jerusalem.
14 He has come here with a warrant from the chief priests to arrest everybody who invokes your name.'
15 The Lord replied, `Go, for this man is my chosen instrument to bring my name before gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel;
16 I myself will show him how much he must suffer for my name.'
17 Then Ananias went. He entered the house, and laid his
hands on Saul and said, 'Brother Saul, I have been sent by
the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, so
that you may recover your sight and be filled with the Holy
Spirit.'
18 It was as though scales fell away from his eyes and
immediately he was able to see again. So he got up and
was baptised,
19 and after taking some food he regained his strength.
After he had spent only a few days with the disciples in
Damascus,
20 he began preaching in the synagogues, 'Jesus is the Son
of God.'
21 All his hearers were amazed, and said, 'Surely, this is
the man who did such damage in Jerusalem to the people
who invoke this name, and who came here for the sole
purpose of arresting them to have them tried by the chief
priests?'
22 Saul's power increased steadily, and he was able to
throw the Jewish colony at Damascus into complete
confusion by the way he demonstrated that Jesus was the
Christ.

WEDNESDAY


23 Some time passed, and the Jews worked out a plot to
kill Saul,  
24 but news of it reached Saul. They were keeping watch at the gates day and night in order to kill him,  
25 but the disciples took him by night and let him down from the wall, lowering him in a basket.  
26 When he got to Jerusalem he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him: they could not believe he was really a disciple.  
27 Barnabas, however, took charge of him, introduced him to the apostles, and explained how the Lord had appeared to him and spoken to him on his journey, and how he had preached fearlessly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.  
28 Saul now started to go round with them in Jerusalem, preaching fearlessly in the name of the Lord.  
29 But after he had spoken to the Hellenists and argued with them, they became determined to kill him.  
30 When the brothers got to know of this, they took him to Caesarea and sent him off from there to Tarsus.  
31 The churches throughout Judaea, Galilee and Samaria were now left in peace, building themselves up and living in the fear of the Lord; encouraged by the Holy Spirit, they continued to grow.  
32 It happened that Peter visited one place after another and eventually came to God's holy people living down in Lydda.  
33 There he found a man called Aeneas, a paralytic who had been bedridden for eight years.  
34 Peter said to him, `Aeneas, Jesus Christ cures you: get up and make your bed.' Aeneas got up immediately;
35 everybody who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they were converted to the Lord.
36 At Jaffa there was a disciple called Tabitha, or in Greek, Dorcas, who never tired of doing good or giving to those in need.
37 But it happened that at this time she became ill and died, and they washed her and laid her out in an upper room.
38 Lydda is not far from Jaffa, so when the disciples heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to urge him, 'Come to us without delay.'
39 Peter went back with them immediately, and on his arrival they took him to the upper room, where all the widows stood round him in tears, showing him tunics and other clothes Dorcas had made when she was with them.
40 Peter sent everyone out of the room and knelt down and prayed. Then he turned to the dead woman and said, 'Tabitha, stand up.' She opened her eyes, looked at Peter and sat up.
41 Peter helped her to her feet, then he called in the members of the congregation and widows and showed them she was alive.
42 The whole of Jaffa heard about it and many believed in the Lord.
43 Peter stayed on some time in Jaffa, lodging with a leather-tanner called Simon.
One of the centurions of the Italica cohort stationed in Caesarea was called Cornelius.

He and the whole of his household were devout and God-fearing, and he gave generously to Jewish causes and prayed constantly to God.

One day at about the ninth hour he had a vision in which he distinctly saw the angel of God come into his house and call out to him, 'Cornelius!'

He stared at the vision in terror and exclaimed, 'What is it, Lord?' The angel answered, 'Your prayers and charitable gifts have been accepted by God.

Now you must send some men to Jaffa and fetch a man called Simon, known as Peter,

who is lodging with Simon the tanner whose house is by the sea.'

When the angel who said this had gone, Cornelius called two of the slaves and a devout soldier of his staff,

told them all that had happened, and sent them off to Jaffa.

Next day, while they were still on their journey and had only a short distance to go before reaching the town, Peter went to the housetop at about the sixth hour to say his prayers.

He felt hungry and was looking forward to his meal, but before it was ready he fell into a trance
and saw heaven thrown open and something like a big sheet being let down to earth by its four corners; it contained every kind of animal, reptile and bird. A voice then said to him, 'Now, Peter, kill and eat!' But Peter answered, 'Certainly not, Lord; I have never yet eaten anything profane or unclean.'

Again, a second time, the voice spoke to him, 'What God has made clean, you have no right to call profane.' This was repeated three times, and then suddenly the container was drawn up to heaven again.

Peter was still at a loss over the meaning of the vision he had seen, when the men sent by Cornelius arrived. They had asked where Simon's house was and they were now standing at the door, calling out to know if the Simon known as Peter was lodging there.

While Peter's mind was still on the vision, the Spirit told him, 'Look! Some men have come to see you. Hurry down, and do not hesitate to return with them; it was I who told them to come.'

Peter went down and said to them, 'I am the man you are looking for; why have you come?' They said, 'The centurion Cornelius, who is an upright and God-fearing man, highly regarded by the entire Jewish people, was told by God through a holy angel to send for you and bring you to his house and to listen to what you have to say.'

So Peter asked them in and gave them lodging. Next day, he was ready to go off with them, accompanied by
some of the brothers from Jaffa.
24 They reached Caesarea the following day, and Cornelius was waiting for them. He had asked his relations and close friends to be there,
25 and as Peter reached the house Cornelius went out to meet him, fell at his feet and did him reverence.
26 But Peter helped him up. "Stand up," he said, "after all, I am only a man!"
27 Talking together they went in to meet all the people assembled there,
28 and Peter said to them, "You know it is forbidden for Jews to mix with people of another race and visit them; but God has made it clear to me that I must not call anyone profane or unclean.
29 That is why I made no objection to coming when I was sent for; but I should like to know exactly why you sent for me.'
30 Cornelius replied, "At this time three days ago I was in my house saying the prayers for the ninth hour, when I suddenly saw a man in front of me in shining robes.
31 He said, "Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your charitable gifts have not been forgotten by God;
32 so now you must send to Jaffa and fetch Simon known as Peter who is lodging in the house of Simon the tanner, by the sea."
33 So I sent for you at once, and you have been kind enough to come. Here we all are, assembled in front of you to hear all the instructions God has given you.'
FRIDAY


34 Then Peter addressed them, 'I now really understand', he said, 'that God has no favourites,
35 but that anybody of any nationality who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him.
36 'God sent his word to the people of Israel, and it was to them that the good news of peace was brought by Jesus Christ-he is the Lord of all.
37 You know what happened all over Judaea, how Jesus of Nazareth began in Galilee, after John had been preaching baptism.
38 God had anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and because God was with him, Jesus went about doing good and curing all who had fallen into the power of the devil.
39 Now we are witnesses to everything he did throughout the countryside of Judaea and in Jerusalem itself: and they killed him by hanging him on a tree,
40 yet on the third day God raised him to life and allowed him to be seen,
41 not by the whole people but only by certain witnesses that God had chosen beforehand. Now we are those witnesses-we have eaten and drunk with him after his
resurrection from the dead-
42 and he has ordered us to proclaim this to his people and
to bear witness that God has appointed him to judge
everyone, alive or dead.
43 It is to him that all the prophets bear this witness: that all who believe in Jesus will have their sins forgiven through his name.'
44 While Peter was still speaking the Holy Spirit came
down on all the listeners.
45 Jewish believers who had accompanied Peter were allastonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit should be poured out on gentiles too,
46 since they could hear them speaking strange languages and proclaiming the greatness of God. Peter himself then said,
47 `Could anyone refuse the water of baptism to these people, now they have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?'
48 He then gave orders for them to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ. Afterwards they begged him to stay on for some days.

1 The apostles and the brothers in Judaea heard that gentiles too had accepted the word of God,
2 and when Peter came up to Jerusalem the circumcised believers protested to him
3 and said, `So you have been visiting the uncircumcised and eating with them!'
4 Peter in reply gave them the details point by point,
One day, when I was in the town of Jaffa, he began, ‘I fell into a trance as I was praying and had a vision of something like a big sheet being let down from heaven by its four corners. This sheet came right down beside me. I looked carefully into it and saw four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, reptiles, and birds of heaven. Then I heard a voice that said to me, "Now, Peter, kill and eat!"

But I answered, "Certainly not, Lord; nothing profane or unclean has ever crossed my lips."

And a second time the voice spoke from heaven, "What God has made clean, you have no right to call profane."

This was repeated three times, before the whole of it was drawn up to heaven again.

Just at that moment, three men stopped outside the house where we were staying; they had been sent from Caesarea to fetch me, and the Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going back with them. The six brothers here came with me as well, and we entered the man's house.

He told us he had seen an angel standing in his house who said, "Send to Jaffa and fetch Simon known as Peter; he has a message for you that will save you and your entire household."

I had scarcely begun to speak when the Holy Spirit came down on them in the same way as it came on us at the beginning,

and I remembered that the Lord had said, "John baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy
17 I realised then that God was giving them the identical gift he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ; and who was I to stand in God's way?'
18 This account satisfied them, and they gave glory to God, saying, 'God has clearly granted to the gentiles too the repentance that leads to life.'

SATURDAY

First Reading From the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 11:19-30)

19 Those who had scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, but they proclaimed the message only to Jews.
20 Some of them, however, who came from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch where they started preaching also to the Greeks, proclaiming the good news of the Lord Jesus to them.
21 The Lord helped them, and a great number believed and were converted to the Lord.
22 The news of them came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem and they sent Barnabas out to Antioch.
23 There he was glad to see for himself that God had given grace, and he urged them all to remain faithful to the Lord
with heartfelt devotion;
24 for he was a good man, filled with the Holy Spirit and with faith. And a large number of people were won over to the Lord.
25 Barnabas then left for Tarsus to look for Saul,
26 and when he found him he brought him to Antioch. And it happened that they stayed together in that church a whole year, instructing a large number of people. It was at Antioch that the disciples were first called `Christians'.
27 While they were there some prophets came down to Antioch from Jerusalem,
28 and one of them whose name was Agabus, seized by the Spirit, stood up and predicted that a severe and universal famine was going to happen. This in fact happened while Claudius was emperor.
29 The disciples decided to send relief, each to contribute what he could afford, to the brothers living in Judaea.
30 They did this and delivered their contributions to the elders through the agency of Barnabas and Saul.

FOURTH WEEK OF EASTER
SUNDAY
First Reading From the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 12:1-23)
1 It was about this time that King Herod started
persecuting certain members of the church.
2 He had James the brother of John beheaded,
3 and when he saw that this pleased the Jews he went on to
arrest Peter as well.
4 As it was during the days of Unleavened Bread that he
had arrested him, he put him in prison, assigning four
sections of four soldiers each to guard him, meaning to try
him in public after the Passover.
5 All the time Peter was under guard the church prayed to
God for him unremittingly.
6 On the night before Herod was to try him, Peter was
sleeping between two soldiers, fastened with two chains,
while guards kept watch at the main entrance to the prison.
7 Then suddenly an angel of the Lord stood there, and the
cell was filled with light. He tapped Peter on the side and
woke him. `Get up!' he said, `Hurry!' and the chains fell
from his hands.
8 The angel then said, `Put on your belt and sandals.' After
he had done this, the angel next said, `Wrap your cloak
round you and follow me.'
9 He followed him out, but had no idea that what the angel
did was all happening in reality; he thought he was seeing a
vision.
10 They passed through the first guard post and then the
second and reached the iron gate leading to the city. This
opened of its own accord; they went through it and had
walked the whole length of one street when suddenly the
angel left him.
11 It was only then that Peter came to himself. And he said,
'Now I know it is all true. The Lord really did send his angel and save me from Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.'
12 As soon as he realised this he went straight to the house of Mary the mother of John Mark, where a number of people had assembled and were praying. 
13 He knocked at the outside door and a servant called Rhoda came to answer it.
14 She recognised Peter's voice and was so overcome with joy that, instead of opening the door, she ran inside with the news that Peter was standing at the main entrance. 
15 They said to her, `You are out of your mind,' but she insisted that it was true. Then they said, `It must be his angel!'
16 Peter, meanwhile, was still knocking. When they opened the door, they were amazed to see that it really was Peter himself.
17 He raised his hand for silence and described to them how the Lord had led him out of prison. He added, `Tell James and the brothers.' Then he left and went elsewhere. 
18 When daylight came there was a great commotion among the soldiers, who could not imagine what had become of Peter. 
19 Herod put out an unsuccessful search for him; he had the guards questioned, and before leaving Judaea to take up residence in Caesarea he gave orders for their execution. 
20 Now Herod was on bad terms with the Tyrians and Sidonians. Yet they sent a joint deputation which managed to enlist the support of Blastus, the king's chamberlain, and
through him negotiated a treaty, since their country depended for its food supply on the king's territory.
21 A day was fixed, and Herod, wearing his robes of state and seated on a throne, began to make a speech to them.
22 The people acclaimed him with, 'It is a god speaking, not a man!'
23 and at that moment the angel of the Lord struck him down, because he had not given the glory to God. He was eaten away by worms and died.

MONDAY


24 The word of God continued to spread and to gain followers.
25 Barnabas and Saul completed their task at Jerusalem and came back, bringing John Mark with them.

1 In the church at Antioch the following were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen, who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.
2 One day while they were offering worship to the Lord and keeping a fast, the Holy Spirit said, 'I want Barnabas and Saul set apart for the work to which I have called them.'
So it was that after fasting and prayer they laid their hands on them and sent them off. 

So these two, sent on their mission by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia and from there set sail for Cyprus. They landed at Salamis and proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; John acted as their assistant. They travelled the whole length of the island, and at Paphos they came in contact with a Jewish magician and false prophet called Bar-Jesus.

He was one of the attendants of the proconsul Sergius Paulus, who was an extremely intelligent man. The proconsul summoned Barnabas and Saul and asked to hear the word of God,

but Elymas the magician (this is what his name means in Greek) tried to stop them so as to prevent the proconsul's conversion to the faith.

Then Saul, whose other name is Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked at him intently and said, `You utter fraud, you impostor, you son of the devil, you enemy of all uprightness, will you not stop twisting the straightforward ways of the Lord? Now watch how the hand of the Lord will strike you: you will be blind, and for a time you will not see the sun.' That instant, everything went misty and dark for him, and he groped about to find someone to lead him by the hand.

The proconsul, who had watched everything, became a believer, being much struck by what he had learnt about the Lord.

Paul and his companions went by sea from Paphos to
Perga in Pamphylia where John left them to go back to Jerusalem.

14 The others carried on from Perga till they reached Antioch in Pisidia. Here they went to synagogue on the Sabbath and took their seats.

TUESDAY


14 The others carried on from Perga till they reached Antioch in Pisidia. Here they went to synagogue on the Sabbath and took their seats.

15 After the passages from the Law and the Prophets had been read, the presidents of the synagogue sent them a message, `Brothers, if you would like to address some words of encouragement to the congregation, please do so.'

16 Paul stood up, raised his hand for silence and began to speak: `Men of Israel, and fearers of God, listen!

17 The God of our nation Israel chose our ancestors and made our people great when they were living in Egypt, a land not their own; then by divine power he led them out

18 and for about forty years took care of them in the desert.

19 When he had destroyed seven nations in Canaan, he put them in possession of their land

20 for about four hundred and fifty years. After this he
gave them judges, down to the prophet Samuel.
21 Then they demanded a king, and God gave them Saul son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin. After forty years,
22 he deposed him and raised up David to be king, whom he attested in these words, "I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart, who will perform my entire will."
23 To keep his promise, God has raised up for Israel one of David's descendants, Jesus, as Saviour,
24 whose coming was heralded by John when he proclaimed a baptism of repentance for the whole people of Israel.
25 Before John ended his course he said, "I am not the one you imagine me to be; there is someone coming after me whose sandal I am not fit to undo."
26 `My brothers, sons of Abraham's race, and all you godfearers, this message of salvation is meant for you.
27 What the people of Jerusalem and their rulers did, though they did not realise it, was in fact to fulfil the prophecies read on every Sabbath.
28 Though they found nothing to justify his execution, they condemned him and asked Pilate to have him put to death.
29 When they had carried out everything that scripture foretells about him they took him down from the tree and buried him in a tomb.
30 But God raised him from the dead,
31 and for many days he appeared to those who had accompanied him from Galilee to Jerusalem: and it is these
same companions of his who are now his witnesses before our people.
32 `We have come here to tell you the good news that the promise made to our ancestors has come about.
33 God has fulfilled it to their children by raising Jesus from the dead. As scripture says in the psalms: You are my son: today I have fathered you.
34 The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to return to corruption, is no more than what he had declared: To you I shall give the holy things promised to David which can be relied upon.
35 This is also why it says in another text: You will not allow your Holy One to see corruption.
36 Now when David in his own time had served God's purposes he died; he was buried with his ancestors and has certainly seen corruption.
37 The one whom God has raised up, however, has not seen corruption.
38 `My brothers, I want you to realise that it is through him that forgiveness of sins is being proclaimed to you. Through him justification from all sins from which the Law of Moses was unable to justify
39 is being offered to every believer.
40 `So be careful-or what the prophets say will happen to you.
41 Cast your eyes around you, mockers; be amazed, and perish! For I am doing something in your own days that you would never believe if you were told of it.'
42 As they left they were urged to continue this preaching
the following Sabbath.
43 When the meeting broke up many Jews and devout converts followed Paul and Barnabas, and in their talks with them Paul and Barnabas urged them to remain faithful to the grace God had given them.

WEDNESDAY


44 The next Sabbath almost the whole town assembled to hear the word of God.
45 When they saw the crowds, the Jews, filled with jealousy, used blasphemies to contradict everything Paul said.
46 Then Paul and Barnabas spoke out fearlessly. `We had to proclaim the word of God to you first, but since you have rejected it, since you do not think yourselves worthy of eternal life, here and now we turn to the gentiles.
47 For this is what the Lord commanded us to do when he said: I have made you a light to the nations, so that my salvation may reach the remotest parts of the earth.'
48 It made the gentiles very happy to hear this and they gave thanks to the Lord for his message; all who were destined for eternal life became believers.
49 Thus the word of the Lord spread through the whole
countryside.
50 But the Jews worked on some of the devout women of the upper classes and the leading men of the city; they stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas and expelled them from their territory.
51 So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and went off to Iconium; but the converts were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit.

1 It happened that at Iconium they went to the Jewish synagogue, in the same way, and they spoke so effectively that a great many Jews and Greeks became believers.
2 (However, the Jews who refused to believe stirred up the gentiles against the brothers and set them in opposition.)
3 Accordingly Paul and Barnabas stayed on for some time, preaching fearlessly in the Lord; and he attested all they said about his gift of grace, allowing signs and wonders to be performed by them.
4 The people in the city were divided; some supported the Jews, others the apostles,
5 but eventually with the connivance of the authorities a move was made by gentiles as well as Jews to make attacks on them and to stone them.
6 When they came to hear of this, they went off for safety to Lycaonia where, in the towns of Lystra and Derbe and in the surrounding country,
7 they preached the good news.
8 There was a man sitting there who had never walked in his life, because his feet were crippled from birth; 9 he was listening to Paul preaching, and Paul looked at him intently and saw that he had the faith to be cured. 10 Paul said in a loud voice, `Get to your feet-stand up,' and the cripple jumped up and began to walk. 11 When the crowds saw what Paul had done they shouted in the language of Lycaonia, `The gods have come down to us in human form.' 12 They addressed Barnabas as Zeus, and since Paul was the principal speaker they called him Hermes. 13 The priests of Zeus-outside-the-Gate, proposing that all the people should offer sacrifice with them, brought garlanded oxen to the gates. 14 When the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard what was happening they tore their clothes, and rushed into the crowd, shouting, 15 `Friends, what do you think you are doing? We are only human beings, mortal like yourselves. We have come with good news to make you turn from these empty idols to the living God who made sky and earth and the sea and all that these hold. 16 In the past he allowed all the nations to go their own
17 but even then he did not leave you without evidence of himself in the good things he does for you: he sends you rain from heaven and seasons of fruitfulness; he fills you with food and your hearts with merriment.'
18 With this speech they just managed to prevent the crowd from offering them sacrifice.
19 Then some Jews arrived from Antioch and Iconium and turned the people against them. They stoned Paul and dragged him outside the town, thinking he was dead.
20 The disciples came crowding round him but, as they did so, he stood up and went back to the town. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe.
21 Having preached the good news in that town and made a considerable number of disciples, they went back through Lystra, Iconium and Antioch.
22 They put fresh heart into the disciples, encouraging them to persevere in the faith, saying, 'We must all experience many hardships before we enter the kingdom of God.'
23 In each of these churches they appointed elders, and with prayer and fasting they commended them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe.
24 They passed through Pisidia and reached Pamphylia.
25 Then after proclaiming the word at Perga they went down to Attalia.
26 and from there sailed for Antioch, where they had originally been commended to the grace of God for the work they had now completed.
27 On their arrival they assembled the church and gave an account of all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith to the gentiles.
28 They stayed there with the disciples for some time.

1 Then some men came down from Judaea and taught the brothers, 'Unless you have yourselves circumcised in the tradition of Moses you cannot be saved.'
2 This led to disagreement, and after Paul and Barnabas had had a long argument with these men it was decided that Paul and Barnabas and others of the church should go up to Jerusalem and discuss the question with the apostles and elders.
3 The members of the church saw them off, and as they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria they told how the gentiles had been converted, and this news was received with the greatest satisfaction by all the brothers.
4 When they arrived in Jerusalem they were welcomed by the church and by the apostles and elders, and gave an account of all that God had done through them.

FRIDAY

First Reading From the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 15:5-35)

5 But certain members of the Pharisees' party who had become believers objected, insisting that gentiles should be
circumcised and instructed to keep the Law of Moses.
6 The apostles and elders met to look into the matter,
7 and after a long discussion, Peter stood up and addressed
them.
`My brothers,' he said, `you know perfectly well that in the
early days God made his choice among you: the gentiles
were to learn the good news from me and so become
believers.
8 And God, who can read everyone's heart, showed his
approval of them by giving the Holy Spirit to them just as
he had to us.
9 God made no distinction between them and us, since he
purified their hearts by faith.
10 Why do you put God to the test now by imposing on the
disciples the very burden that neither our ancestors nor we
ourselves were strong enough to support?
11 But we believe that we are saved in the same way as
they are: through the grace of the Lord Jesus.'
12 The entire assembly fell silent, and they listened to
Barnabas and Paul describing all the signs and wonders
God had worked through them among the gentiles.
13 When they had finished it was James who spoke. `My
brothers,' he said, `listen to me.
14 Simeon has described how God first arranged to enlist a
people for his name out of the gentiles.
15 This is entirely in harmony with the words of the
prophets, since the scriptures say:
16 After that I shall return and rebuild the fallen hut of
David; I shall make good the gaps in it and restore it.
17 Then the rest of humanity, and of all the nations once called mine, will look for the Lord, says the Lord who made this known so long ago.

19 ‘My verdict is, then, that instead of making things more difficult for gentiles who turn to God,
20 we should send them a letter telling them merely to abstain from anything polluted by idols, from illicit marriages, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood.
21 For Moses has always had his preachers in every town and is read aloud in the synagogues every Sabbath.’
22 Then the apostles and elders, with the whole church, decided to choose delegates from among themselves to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas, known as Barsabbas, and Silas, both leading men in the brotherhood,
23 and gave them this letter to take with them: ‘The apostles and elders, your brothers, send greetings to the brothers of gentile birth in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia.
24 We hear that some people coming from here, but acting without any authority from ourselves, have disturbed you with their demands and have unsettled your minds;
25 and so we have decided unanimously to elect delegates and to send them to you with our well-beloved Barnabas and Paul,
26 who have committed their lives to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.
27 Accordingly we are sending you Judas and Silas, who
will confirm by word of mouth what we have written.
28 It has been decided by the Holy Spirit and by ourselves not to impose on you any burden beyond these essentials: 29 you are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from illicit marriages. Avoid these, and you will do what is right. Farewell.'
30 The party left and went down to Antioch, where they summoned the whole community and delivered the letter.
31 The community read it and were delighted with the encouragement it gave them.
32 Judas and Silas, being themselves prophets, spoke for a long time, encouraging and strengthening the brothers.
33 These two spent some time there, and then the brothers wished them peace and
34 they went back to those who had sent them.
35 Paul and Barnabas, however, stayed on in Antioch, and there with many others they taught and proclaimed the good news, the word of the Lord.

SATURDAY

First Reading From the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 15:36-16:15)

36 On a later occasion Paul said to Barnabas, `Let us go back and visit the brothers in all the towns where we
preached the word of the Lord, so that we can see how they are doing.'
37 Barnabas suggested taking John Mark,
38 but Paul was not in favour of taking along the man who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had refused to share in their work.
39 There was sharp disagreement so that they parted company, and Barnabas sailed off with Mark to Cyprus.
40 Before Paul left, he chose Silas to accompany him and was commended by the brothers to the grace of God.
41 He travelled through Syria and Cilicia, consolidating the churches.

1 From there he went to Derbe, and then on to Lystra, where there was a disciple called Timothy, whose mother was Jewish and had become a believer; but his father was a Greek.
2 The brothers at Lystra and Iconium spoke well of him,
3 and Paul, who wanted to have him as a travelling companion, had him circumcised. This was on account of the Jews in the locality where everyone knew his father was a Greek.
4 As they visited one town after another, they passed on the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, with instructions to observe them.
5 So the churches grew strong in the faith, as well as growing daily in numbers.
6 They travelled through Phrygia and the Galatian country, because they had been told by the Holy Spirit not to preach
the word in Asia.

7 When they reached the frontier of Mysia they tried to go into Bithynia, but as the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them,
8 they went through Mysia and came down to Troas.

9 One night Paul had a vision: a Macedonian appeared and kept urging him in these words, 'Come across to Macedonia and help us.'

10 Once he had seen this vision we lost no time in arranging a passage to Macedonia, convinced that God had called us to bring them the good news.

11 Sailing from Troas we made a straight run for Samothrace; the next day for Neapolis,
12 and from there for Philippi, a Roman colony and the principal city of that district of Macedonia.

13 After a few days in this city we went outside the gates beside a river as it was the Sabbath and this was a customary place for prayer. We sat down and preached to the women who had come to the meeting.

14 One of these women was called Lydia, a woman from the town of Thyatira who was in the purple-dye trade, and who revered God. She listened to us, and the Lord opened her heart to accept what Paul was saying.

15 After she and her household had been baptised she kept urging us, 'If you judge me a true believer in the Lord,' she said, 'come and stay with us.' And she would take no refusal.
FIFTH WEEK OF EASTER

SUNDAY

First Reading From the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 16:16-40)

16 It happened one day that as we were going to prayer, we were met by a slave-girl who was a soothsayer and made a lot of money for her masters by foretelling the future.
17 This girl started following Paul and the rest of us and shouting, `Here are the servants of the Most High God; they have come to tell you how to be saved!'
18 She did this day after day until Paul was exasperated and turned round and said to the spirit, `I order you in the name of Jesus Christ to leave that woman.' The spirit went out of her then and there.
19 When her masters saw that there was no hope of making any more money out of her, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities.
20 Taking them before the magistrates they said, `These people are causing a disturbance in our city. They are Jews and are advocating practices which it is unlawful for us as Romans to accept or follow.'
22 The crowd joined in and showed its hostility to them, so the magistrates had them stripped and ordered them to be flogged.
23 They were given many lashes and then thrown into
prison, and the gaoler was told to keep a close watch on them.
24 So, following such instructions, he threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.
25 In the middle of the night Paul and Silas were praying and singing God's praises, while the other prisoners listened.
26 Suddenly there was an earthquake that shook the prison to its foundations. All the doors flew open and the chains fell from all the prisoners.
27 When the gaoler woke and saw the doors wide open he drew his sword and was about to commit suicide, presuming that the prisoners had escaped.
28 But Paul shouted at the top of his voice, `Do yourself no harm; we are all here.'
29 He called for lights, then rushed in, threw himself trembling at the feet of Paul and Silas, and escorted them out, saying, `Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'
30 They told him, `Become a believer in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, and your household too.'
31 Then they preached the word of the Lord to him and to all his household.
32 Late as it was, he took them to wash their wounds, and was baptised then and there with all his household.
33 Afterwards he took them into his house and gave them a meal, and the whole household celebrated their conversion to belief in God.
35 When it was daylight the magistrates sent the lictors
with the order: `Release those men.'
36 The gaoler reported the message to Paul, `The magistrates have sent an order for your release; you can go now and be on your way.'
37 `What!' Paul replied. `Without trial they gave us a public flogging, though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison, and now they want to send us away on the quiet! Oh no! They must come and escort us out themselves.'
38 The lictors reported this to the magistrates, who were terrified when they heard they were Roman citizens.
39 They came and urged them to leave the town.
40 From the prison they went to Lydia's house where they saw all the brothers and gave them some encouragement; then they left.

MONDAY


1 Passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they eventually reached Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue.
2 Paul as usual went in and for three consecutive Sabbaths developed the arguments from scripture for them,
3 explaining and proving how it was ordained that the Christ should suffer and rise from the dead. `And the Christ', he said, `is this Jesus whom I am proclaiming to
you.'
4 Some of them were convinced and joined Paul and Silas, and so did a great many godfearing people and Greeks, as well as a number of the leading women.
5 The Jews, full of resentment, enlisted the help of a gang from the market place, stirred up a crowd, and soon had the whole city in an uproar. They made for Jason's house, hoping to bring them before the People's Assembly; 6 however, they found only Jason and some of the brothers, and these they dragged before the city council, shouting, 'The people who have been turning the whole world upside down have come here now; 7 they have been staying at Jason's. They have broken Caesar's edicts by claiming that there is another king, Jesus.'
8 Hearing this, the citizens and the city councillors were alarmed,
9 and they made Jason and the rest give security before setting them free.
10 When it was dark the brothers immediately sent Paul and Silas away to Beroea, where they went to the Jewish synagogue as soon as they arrived.
11 Here the Jews were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, and they welcomed the word very readily; every day they studied the scriptures to check whether it was true.
12 Many of them became believers, and so did many Greek women of high standing and a number of the men.
13 When the Jews of Thessalonica came to learn that the
word of God was being preached by Paul in Beroea as well, they went there to make trouble and stir up the people.
14 So the brothers arranged for Paul to go immediately as far as the coast, leaving Silas and Timothy behind.
15 Paul's escort took him as far as Athens, and went back with instructions for Silas and Timothy to rejoin Paul as soon as they could.
16 Paul waited for them in Athens and there his whole soul was revolted at the sight of a city given over to idolatry.
17 In the synagogue he debated with the Jews and the godfearing, and in the market place he debated every day with anyone whom he met.
18 Even a few Epicurean and Stoic philosophers argued with him. Some said, `What can this parrot mean?' And, because he was preaching about Jesus and Resurrection, others said, `He seems to be a propagandist for some outlandish gods.'

TUESDAY
First Reading From the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 17:19-34)

19 They got him to accompany them to the Areopagus, where they said to him, `Can we know what this new doctrine is that you are teaching?
Some of the things you say seemed startling to us and we would like to find out what they mean.'

The one amusement the Athenians and the foreigners living there seem to have is to discuss and listen to the latest ideas.

So Paul stood before the whole council of the Areopagus and made this speech:

`Men of Athens, I have seen for myself how extremely scrupulous you are in all religious matters,
because, as I strolled round looking at your sacred monuments, I noticed among other things an altar inscribed: To An Unknown God. In fact, the unknown God you revere is the one I proclaim to you.

`Since the God who made the world and everything in it is himself Lord of heaven and earth, he does not make his home in shrines made by human hands.

Nor is he in need of anything, that he should be served by human hands; on the contrary, it is he who gives everything—including life and breath—to everyone.

From one single principle he not only created the whole human race so that they could occupy the entire earth, but he decreed the times and limits of their habitation.

And he did this so that they might seek the deity and, by feeling their way towards him, succeed in finding him; and indeed he is not far from any of us,
since it is in him that we live, and move, and exist, as indeed some of your own writers have said: We are all his children.
29 `Since we are the children of God, we have no excuse for thinking that the deity looks like anything in gold, silver or stone that has been carved and designed by a man.  
30 `But now, overlooking the times of ignorance, God is telling everyone everywhere that they must repent,  
31 because he has fixed a day when the whole world will be judged in uprightness by a man he has appointed. And God has publicly proved this by raising him from the dead.'  
32 At this mention of rising from the dead, some of them burst out laughing; others said, `We would like to hear you talk about this another time.'  
33 After that Paul left them,  
34 but there were some who attached themselves to him and became believers, among them Dionysius the Aeropagite and a woman called Damaris, and others besides.

WEDNESDAY

trade as himself, he lodged with them, and they worked together.

4 Every Sabbath he used to hold debates in the synagogues, trying to convert Jews as well as Greeks.

5 After Silas and Timothy had arrived from Macedonia, Paul devoted all his time to preaching, declaring to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

6 When they turned against him and started to insult him, he took his cloak and shook it out in front of them, saying, `Your blood be on your own heads; from now on I will go to the gentiles with a clear conscience.'

7 Then he left the synagogue and moved to the house next door that belonged to a worshipper of God called Justus.

8 Crispus, president of the synagogue, and his whole household, all became believers in the Lord. Many Corinthians when they heard this became believers and were baptised.

9 One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision, `Be fearless; speak out and do not keep silence:
10 I am with you. I have so many people that belong to me in this city that no one will attempt to hurt you.'

11 So Paul stayed there preaching the word of God among them for eighteen months.

12 But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a concerted attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, saying,

13 `We accuse this man of persuading people to worship God in a way that breaks the Law.'

14 Before Paul could open his mouth, Gallio said to the
Jews, `Listen, you Jews. If this were a misdemeanour or a crime, it would be in order for me to listen to your plea; but if it is only quibbles about words and names, and about your own Law, then you must deal with it yourselves—I have no intention of making legal decisions about these things.'

16 Then he began to hustle them out of the court,
17 and at once they all turned on Sosthenes, the synagogue president, and beat him in front of the tribunal. Gallio refused to take any notice at all.

18 After staying on for some time, Paul took leave of the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. At Cenchreae he had his hair cut off, because of a vow he had made.

19 When they reached Ephesus, he left them, but first he went alone to the synagogue to debate with the Jews.

20 They asked him to stay longer, but he declined,
21 though when he took his leave he said, `I will come back another time, God willing.' Then he sailed from Ephesus.

22 He landed at Caesarea and went up to greet the church. Then he came down to Antioch
23 where he spent a short time before continuing his journey through the Galatian country and then through Phrygia, encouraging all the followers.

24 An Alexandrian Jew named Apollos now arrived in Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, with a sound knowledge of the scriptures, and yet,

25 though he had been given instruction in the Way of the
Lord and preached with great spiritual fervour and was accurate in all the details he taught about Jesus, he had experienced only the baptism of John.

26 He began to teach fearlessly in the synagogue and, when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they attached themselves to him and gave him more detailed instruction about the Way.

27 When Apollos thought of crossing over to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote asking the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived there he was able by God's grace to help the believers considerably

28 by the energetic way he refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating from the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

THURSDAY

First Reading From the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 19:1-20)

1 It happened that while Apollos was in Corinth, Paul made his way overland as far as Ephesus, where he found a number of disciples.

2 When he asked, `Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?' they answered, `No, we were never even told there was such a thing as a Holy Spirit.'

3 He asked, `Then how were you baptised?' They replied, `With John's baptism.'

4 Paul said, `John's baptism was a baptism of repentance;
but he insisted that the people should believe in the one who was to come after him—namely Jesus.'

5 When they heard this, they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus,
6 and the moment Paul had laid hands on them the Holy Spirit came down on them, and they began to speak with tongues and to prophesy.
7 There were about twelve of these men in all.
8 He began by going to the synagogue, where he spoke out fearlessly and argued persuasively about the kingdom of God. He did this for three months,
9 till the attitude of some of the congregation hardened into unbelief. As soon as they began attacking the Way in public, he broke with them and took his disciples apart to hold daily discussions in the lecture room of Tyrannus.
10 This went on for two years, with the result that all the inhabitants of Asia, both Jews and Greeks, were able to hear the word of the Lord.
11 So remarkable were the miracles worked by God at Paul's hands
12 that handkerchiefs or aprons which had touched him were taken to the sick, and they were cured of their illnesses, and the evil spirits came out of them.
13 But some itinerant Jewish exorcists too tried pronouncing the name of the Lord Jesus over people who were possessed by evil spirits; they used to say, `I adjure you by the Jesus whose spokesman is Paul.'
14 Among those who did this were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest.
15 The evil spirit replied, 'Jesus I recognise, and Paul I know, but who are you?'
16 and the man with the evil spirit hurled himself at them and overpowered first one and then another, and handled them so violently that they fled from that house stripped of clothing and badly mauled.
17 Everybody in Ephesus, both Jews and Greeks, heard about this episode; everyone was filled with awe, and the name of the Lord Jesus came to be held in great honour.
18 Some believers, too, came forward to admit in detail how they had used spells
19 and a number of them who had practised magic collected their books and made a bonfire of them in public. The value of these was calculated to be fifty thousand silver pieces.
20 In this powerful way the word of the Lord spread more and more widely and successfully.

FRIDAY


21 When all this was over Paul made up his mind to go back to Jerusalem through Macedonia and Achaia. 'After I have been there,' he said, 'I must go on to see Rome as well.'
22 So he sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus,
ahead of him to Macedonia, while he remained for a time in Asia.
23 It was during this time that a serious disturbance broke out in connection with the Way.
24 A silversmith called Demetrius, who provided work for a large number of craftsmen making silver shrines of Diana,
25 called a general meeting of them with others in the same trade. `As you know,’ he said, `it is on this industry that we depend for our prosperity.
26 Now you must have seen and heard how, not just in Ephesus but nearly everywhere in Asia, this man Paul has persuaded and converted a great number of people with his argument that gods made by hand are not gods at all.
27 This threatens not only to discredit our trade, but also to reduce the sanctuary of the great goddess Diana to unimportance. It could end up by taking away the prestige of a goddess venerated all over Asia, and indeed all over the world.’
28 This speech roused them to fury, and they started to shout, `Great is Diana of the Ephesians!’
29 The whole town was filled with the uproar and the mob made a concerted rush to the theatre, dragging along two of Paul's Macedonian travelling companions, Gaius and Aristarchus.
30 Paul wanted to make an appeal to the people, but the disciples refused to let him;
31 in fact, some of the Asiarchs, who were friends of his, sent messages urging him not to take the risk of going into
the theatre.
32 By now everybody was shouting different things, till the assembly itself had no idea what was going on; most of them did not even know why they had gathered together.
33 Some of the crowd prevailed upon Alexander, whom the Jews pushed forward; he raised his hand for silence with the intention of explaining things to the people.
34 As soon as they realised he was a Jew, they all started shouting in unison, ‘Great is Diana of the Ephesians!’ and they kept this up for two hours.
35 When the town clerk eventually succeeded in calming the crowd, he said, ‘Citizens of Ephesus! Is there anybody who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is the guardian of the temple of great Diana and of her statue that fell from heaven?
36 Nobody can contradict this and there is no need for you to get excited or do anything rash.
37 These men you have brought here are not guilty of any sacrilege or blasphemy against our goddess.
38 If Demetrius and the craftsmen he has with him want to complain about anyone, there are the assizes and the proconsuls; let them take the case to court.
39 And if you want to ask any more questions you must raise them in the regular assembly.
40 We could easily be charged with rioting for today's happenings: there is no ground for it all, and we can give no justification for this gathering.’ When he had finished this speech he dismissed the assembly.
1 When the disturbance was over, Paul sent for the disciples and, after speaking words of encouragement to them, said good-bye and set out for Macedonia.
2 On his way through those areas he said many words of encouragement to them and then made his way into Greece,
3 where he spent three months. He was leaving by ship for Syria when a plot organised against him by the Jews made him decide to go back by way of Macedonia.
4 He was accompanied by Sopater, son of Pyrrhus, who came from Beroea; Aristarchus and Secundus who came from Thessalonica; Gaius from Derbe, and Timothy, as well as Tychicus and Trophimus who were from Asia.
5 They all went on to Troas where they waited for us.
6 We ourselves left Philippi by ship after the days of Unleavened Bread and joined them five days later at Troas, where we stayed for a week.
7 On the first day of the week we met for the breaking of bread. Paul was due to leave the next day, and he preached a sermon that went on till the middle of the night.
8 A number of lamps were lit in the upstairs room where we were assembled,
9 and as Paul went on and on, a young man called
Eutychus who was sitting on the window-sill grew drowsy and was overcome by sleep and fell to the ground three floors below. He was picked up dead.

10 Paul went down and stooped to clasp the boy to him, saying, 'There is no need to worry, there is still life in him.'

11 Then he went back upstairs where he broke the bread and ate and carried on talking till he left at daybreak.

12 They took the boy away alive, and were greatly encouraged.

13 We were now to go on ahead by sea, so we set sail for Assos, where we were to take Paul on board; this was what he had arranged, for he wanted to go overland.

14 When he rejoined us at Assos we took him aboard and went on to Mitylene.

15 The next day we sailed from there and arrived opposite Chios. The second day we touched at Samos and, after stopping at Trogyllium, made Miletus the next day.

16 Paul had decided to pass wide of Ephesus so as to avoid spending time in Asia, since he was anxious to be in Jerusalem, if possible, for the day of Pentecost.

SIXTH WEEK OF EASTER

SUNDAY

First Reading From the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 20:17-38)
17 From Miletus he sent for the elders of the church of Ephesus.
18 When they arrived he addressed these words to them: ‘You know what my way of life has been ever since the first day I set foot among you in Asia,
19 how I have served the Lord in all humility, with all the sorrows and trials that came to me through the plots of the Jews.
20 I have not hesitated to do anything that would be helpful to you; I have preached to you and instructed you both in public and in your homes,
21 urging both Jews and Greeks to turn to God and to believe in our Lord Jesus.
22 `And now you see me on my way to Jerusalem in captivity to the Spirit; I have no idea what will happen to me there,
23 except that the Holy Spirit, in town after town, has made it clear to me that imprisonment and persecution await me.
24 But I do not place any value on my own life, provided that I complete the mission the Lord Jesus gave me-to bear witness to the good news of God's grace.
25 `I now feel sure that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will ever see my face again.
26 And so on this very day I swear that my conscience is clear as far as all of you are concerned,
27 for I have without faltering put before you the whole of
God's purpose.
28 `Be on your guard for yourselves and for all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you the guardians, to feed the Church of God which he bought with the blood of his own Son.
29 `I know quite well that when I have gone fierce wolves will invade you and will have no mercy on the flock. 30 Even from your own ranks there will be men coming forward with a travesty of the truth on their lips to induce the disciples to follow them.
31 So be on your guard, remembering how night and day for three years I never slackened in counselling each one of you with tears.
32 And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace that has power to build you up and to give you your inheritance among all the sanctified.
33 `I have never asked anyone for money or clothes; 34 you know for yourselves that these hands of mine earned enough to meet my needs and those of my companions.
35 By every means I have shown you that we must exert ourselves in this way to support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, who himself said, "There is more happiness in giving than in receiving."'
36 When he had finished speaking he knelt down with them all and prayed.
37 By now they were all in tears; they put their arms round Paul's neck and kissed him;
38 what saddened them most was his saying they would
never see his face again. Then they escorted him to the ship.

MONDAY


(Acts 21:1-26)
1 When we had at last torn ourselves away from them and put to sea, we set a straight course and arrived at Cos; the next day we reached Rhodes, and from there went on to Patara.
2 Here we found a ship bound for Phoenicia, so we went on board and sailed in her.
3 After sighting Cyprus and leaving it to port, we sailed to Syria and put in at Tyre, since the ship was to unload her cargo there.
4 We sought out the disciples and stayed there a week. Speaking in the Spirit, they kept telling Paul not to go on to Jerusalem,
5 but when our time was up we set off. Together with the women and children they all escorted us on our way till we were out of the town. When we reached the beach, we knelt down and prayed;
6 then, after saying good-bye to each other, we went aboard and they returned home.
7 The end of our voyage from Tyre came when we landed
at Ptolemais, where we greeted the brothers and stayed one day with them.
8 The next day we left and came to Caesarea. Here we called on Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven, and stayed with him.
9 He had four unmarried daughters who were prophets.
10 When we had been there several days a prophet called Agabus arrived from Judaea.
11 He came up to us, took Paul's belt and tied up his own feet and hands, and said, `This is what the Holy Spirit says, "The man to whom this girdle belongs will be tied up like this by the Jews in Jerusalem and handed over to the gentiles."'
12 When we heard this, we and all the local people urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.
13 To this he replied, `What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For my part, I am ready not only to be bound but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.'
14 And so, as he would not be persuaded, we gave up the attempt, saying, `The Lord's will be done.'
15 After this we made our preparations and went on up to Jerusalem.
16 Some of the disciples from Caesarea accompanied us and took us to the house of a Cypriot with whom we were to lodge; he was called Mnason and had been one of the earliest disciples.
17 On our arrival in Jerusalem the brothers gave us a very warm welcome.
18 The next day Paul went with us to visit James, and all the elders were present.
19 After greeting them he gave a detailed account of all that God had done among the gentiles through his ministry.
20 They gave glory to God when they heard this. Then they said, 'You see, brother, how thousands of Jews have now become believers, all of them staunch upholders of the Law;
21 and what they have heard about you is that you instruct all Jews living among the gentiles to break away from Moses, authorising them not to circumcise their children or to follow the customary practices.
22 What is to be done? A crowd is sure to gather, for they will hear that you have come.
23 So this is what we suggest that you should do; we have four men here who are under a vow;
24 take these men along and be purified with them and pay all the expenses connected with the shaving of their heads. This will let everyone know there is no truth in the reports they have heard about you, and that you too observe the Law by your way of life.
25 About the gentiles who have become believers, we have written giving them our decision that they must abstain from things sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from illicit marriages.'
26 So the next day Paul took the men along and was purified with them, and he visited the Temple to give notice of the time when the period of purification would be over and the offering would have to be presented on behalf
TUESDAY


27 The seven days were nearly over when some Jews from Asia caught sight of him in the Temple and stirred up the crowd and seized him,
28 shouting, `Men of Israel, help! This is the man who preaches to everyone everywhere against our people, against the Law and against this place. He has even profaned this Holy Place by bringing Greeks into the Temple.'
29 They had, in fact, previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him and thought that Paul had brought him into the Temple.
30 This roused the whole city; people came running from all sides; they seized Paul and dragged him out of the Temple, and the gates were closed behind them.
31 While they were setting about killing him, word reached the tribune of the cohort that there was tumult all over Jerusalem.
32 He immediately called out soldiers and centurions and charged down on the crowd, who stopped beating Paul when they saw the tribune and the soldiers.
33 When the tribune came up he took Paul into custody, had him bound with two chains and enquired who he was and what he had done.
34 People in the crowd called out different things, and since the noise made it impossible for him to get any positive information, the tribune ordered Paul to be taken into the fortress.
35 When Paul reached the steps, the crowd became so violent that he had to be carried by the soldiers;
36 and indeed the whole mob was after them, shouting, `Do away with him!'
37 Just as Paul was being taken into the fortress, he asked the tribune if he could have a word with him. The tribune said, `You speak Greek, then?
38 Aren't you the Egyptian who started the recent revolt and led those four thousand cut-throats out into the desert?'
39 `I?' said Paul, `I am a Jew and a citizen of the well-known city of Tarsus in Cilicia. Please give me permission to speak to the people.'

WEDNESDAY


40 The man gave his consent and Paul, standing at the top of the steps, raised his hand to the people for silence. A
profound silence followed, and he started speaking to them in Hebrew.

1 `My brothers, my fathers, listen to what I have to say to you in my defence.'
2 When they realised he was speaking in Hebrew, the silence was even greater than before.
3 `I am a Jew', Paul said, `and was born at Tarsus in Cilicia. I was brought up here in this city. It was under Gamaliel that I studied and was taught the exact observance of the Law of our ancestors. In fact, I was as full of duty towards God as you all are today.
4 I even persecuted this Way to the death and sent women as well as men to prison in chains
5 as the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify. I even received letters from them to the brothers in Damascus, which I took with me when I set off to bring prisoners back from there to Jerusalem for punishment.
6 `It happened that I was on that journey and nearly at Damascus when in the middle of the day a bright light from heaven suddenly shone round me.
7 I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?"
8 I answered, "Who are you, Lord?" and he said to me, "I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting."
9 The people with me saw the light but did not hear the voice which spoke to me.
10 I said, "What am I to do, Lord?" The Lord answered, "Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told
what you have been appointed to do."
11 Since the light had been so dazzling that I was blind, I got to Damascus only because my companions led me by the hand.
12 `Someone called Ananias, a devout follower of the Law and highly thought of by all the Jews living there, came to see me; he stood beside me and said, "Brother Saul, receive your sight." Instantly my sight came back and I was able to see him.
14 Then he said, "The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will, to see the Upright One and hear his own voice speaking,
15 because you are to be his witness before all humanity, testifying to what you have seen and heard.
16 And now why delay? Hurry and be baptised and wash away your sins, calling on his name."
17 `It happened that, when I got back to Jerusalem, and was praying in the Temple, I fell into a trance
18 and then I saw him. "Hurry," he said, "leave Jerusalem at once; they will not accept the testimony you are giving about me."
19 "Lord," I answered, "they know that I used to go from synagogue to synagogue, imprisoning and flogging those who believed in you;
20 and that when the blood of your witness Stephen was being shed, I, too, was standing by, in full agreement with his murderers, and in charge of their clothes."
21 Then he said to me, "Go! I am sending you out to the gentiles far away."'
I, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you therefore to lead a life worthy of the vocation to which you were called. With all humility and gentleness, and with patience, support each other in love. Take every care to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together. There is one Body, one Spirit, just as one hope is the goal of your calling by God. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all, over all, through all and within all. On each one of us God's favour has been bestowed in whatever way Christ allotted it. That is why it says: He went up to the heights, took captives, he gave gifts to humanity. When it says, `he went up', it must mean that he had gone down to the deepest levels of the earth. The one who went down is none other than the one who went up above all the heavens to fill all things. And to some, his `gift' was that they should be apostles; to some prophets; to some, evangelists; to some, pastors and teachers;
12 to knit God's holy people together for the work of
service to build up the Body of Christ,
13 until we all reach unity in faith and knowledge of the
Son of God and form the perfect Man, fully mature with
the fullness of Christ himself.
14 Then we shall no longer be children, or tossed one way
and another, and carried hither and thither by every new
gust of teaching, at the mercy of all the tricks people play
and their unscrupulousness in deliberate deception.
15 If we live by the truth and in love, we shall grow
completely into Christ, who is the head
16 by whom the whole Body is fitted and joined together,
every joint adding its own strength, for each individual part
to work according to its function. So the body grows until
it has built itself up in love.
17 So this I say to you and attest to you in the Lord, do not
go on living the empty-headed life that the gentiles live.
18 Intellectually they are in the dark, and they are
estranged from the life of God, because of the ignorance
which is the consequence of closed minds.
19 Their sense of right and wrong once dulled, they have
abandoned all self-control and pursue to excess every kind
of uncleanness.
20 Now that is hardly the way you have learnt Christ,
21 unless you failed to hear him properly when you were
taught what the truth is in Jesus.
22 You were to put aside your old self, which belongs to
your old way of life and is corrupted by following illusory
desires.
Your mind was to be renewed in spirit
so that you could put on the New Man that has been
created on God's principles, in the uprightness and holiness
of the truth.

FRIDAY

First Reading From the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 22:22-
23:11)

22 So far they had listened to him, but at these words they
began to shout, `Rid the earth of the man! He is not fit to
live!'
23 They were yelling, waving their cloaks and throwing
dust into the air,
24 and so the tribune had him brought into the fortress and
ordered him to be examined under the lash, to find out the
reason for the outcry against him.
25 But when they had strapped him down Paul said to the
centurion on duty, `Is it legal for you to flog a man who is a
Roman citizen and has not been brought to trial?'
26 When he heard this the centurion went and told the
tribune; `Do you realise what you are doing?' he said. `This
man is a Roman citizen.'
27 So the tribune came and asked him, `Tell me, are you a
Roman citizen?' Paul answered `Yes'.
28 To this the tribune replied, `It cost me a large sum to
acquire this citizenship.' \`But I was born to it,' said Paul. 29 Then those who were about to examine him hurriedly withdrew, and the tribune himself was alarmed when he realised that he had put a Roman citizen in chains. 30 The next day, since he wanted to know for sure what charge the Jews were bringing, he freed Paul and gave orders for a meeting of the chief priests and the entire Sanhedrin; then he brought Paul down and set him in front of them.

1 Paul looked steadily at the Sanhedrin and began to speak, \`My brothers, to this day I have conducted myself before God with a perfectly clear conscience.' 2 At this the high priest Ananias ordered his attendants to strike him on the mouth. 3 Then Paul said to him, \`God will surely strike you, you whitewashed wall! How can you sit there to judge me according to the Law, and then break the Law by ordering a man to strike me?' 4 The attendants said, \`Are you insulting the high priest of God? 5 Paul answered, \`Brothers, I did not realise it was the high priest; certainly scripture says, "You will not curse your people's leader."' 6 Now Paul was well aware that one party was made up of Sadducees and the other of Pharisees, so he called out in the Sanhedrin, \`Brothers, I am a Pharisee and the son of Pharisees. It is for our hope in the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial.'
7 As soon as he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was split between the two parties.
8 For the Sadducees say there is neither resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit, while the Pharisees accept all three.
9 The shouting grew louder, and some of the scribes from the Pharisees' party stood up and protested strongly, `We find nothing wrong with this man. Suppose a spirit has spoken to him, or an angel?'
10 Feeling was running high, and the tribune, afraid that they would tear Paul to pieces, ordered his troops to go down and haul him out and bring him into the fortress.
11 Next night, the Lord appeared to him and said, `Courage! You have borne witness for me in Jerusalem, now you must do the same in Rome.'

SATURDAY


12 When it was day, the Jews held a secret meeting at which they made a vow not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul.
13 More than forty of them entered this pact,
14 and they went to the chief priests and elders and told them, `We have made a solemn vow to let nothing pass our
lips until we have killed Paul.
15 Now it is up to you and the Sanhedrin together to apply to the tribune to bring him down to you, as though you meant to examine his case more closely; we, on our side, are prepared to dispose of him before he reaches you.'
16 But the son of Paul's sister heard of the ambush they were laying and made his way into the fortress and told Paul,
17 who called one of the centurions and said, 'Take this young man to the tribune; he has something to tell him.'
18 So the man took him to the tribune, and reported, 'The prisoner Paul summoned me and requested me to bring this young man to you; he has something to tell you.'
19 Then the tribune took him by the hand and drew him aside and questioned him in private, 'What is it you have to tell me?'
20 He replied, 'The Jews have made a plan to ask you to take Paul down to the Sanhedrin tomorrow, as though they meant to enquire more closely into his case.
21 Do not believe them. There are more than forty of them lying in wait for him, and they have vowed not to eat or drink until they have got rid of him. They are ready now and only waiting for your order to be given.'
22 The tribune let the young man go with this order, 'Tell no one that you have given me this information.'
23 Then he summoned two of the centurions and said, 'Get two hundred soldiers ready to leave for Caesarea by the third hour of the night with seventy cavalry and two hundred auxiliaries;
provide horses for Paul, and deliver him unharmed to Felix the governor.'
He also wrote a letter in these terms:
Claudius Lysias to his Excellency the governor Felix, greetings.
This man had been seized by the Jews and would have been murdered by them; but I came on the scene with my troops and got him away, having discovered that he was a Roman citizen.
Wanting to find out what charge they were making against him, I brought him before their Sanhedrin.
I found that the accusation concerned disputed points of their Law, but that there was no charge deserving death or imprisonment.
Acting on information that there was a conspiracy against the man, I hasten to send him to you, and have notified his accusers that they must state their case against him in your presence.'
The soldiers carried out their orders; they took Paul and escorted him by night to Antipatris.
Next day they left the mounted escort to go on with him and returned to the fortress.
On arriving at Caesarea the escort delivered the letter to the governor and handed Paul over to him.
When he had read it, he asked Paul what province he came from. Learning that he was from Cilicia he said,
'I will hear your case as soon as your accusers are here too.' Then he ordered him to be held in Herod's praetorium.
1 Five days later the high priest Ananias came down with some of the elders and an advocate named Tertullus, and they laid information against Paul before the governor.  
2 Paul was called, and Tertullus opened for the prosecution, `Your Excellency, Felix, the unbroken peace we enjoy and the reforms this nation owes to your foresight are matters we accept, always and everywhere, with all gratitude.  
4 I do not want to take up too much of your time, but I urge you in your graciousness to give us a brief hearing.  
5 We have found this man a perfect pest; he stirs up trouble among Jews the world over and is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect.  
6 He has even attempted to profane the Temple. We placed him under arrest.  
8 If you ask him you can find out for yourself the truth of all our accusations against this man.'  
9 The Jews supported him, asserting that these were the facts.  
10 When the governor motioned him to speak, Paul
answered:
`I know that you have administered justice over this nation for many years, and I can therefore speak with confidence in my defence.

11 As you can verify for yourself, it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem on pilgrimage, 12 and it is not true that they ever found me arguing with anyone or stirring up the mob, either in the Temple, in the synagogues, or about the town; 13 neither can they give you any proof of the accusations they are making against me now.

14 `What I do admit to you is this: it is according to the Way, which they describe as a sect, that I worship the God of my ancestors, retaining my belief in all points of the Law and in what is written in the prophets; 15 and I hold the same hope in God as they do that there will be a resurrection of the upright and the wicked alike. 16 In these things, I, as much as they, do my best to keep a clear conscience at all times before God and everyone.

17 `After several years I came to bring relief-money to my nation and to make offerings; 18 it was in connection with these that they found me in the Temple; I had been purified, and there was no crowd involved, and no disturbance.

19 But some Jews from Asia-these are the ones who should have appeared before you and accused me of whatever they had against me.

20 At least let those who are present say what crime they held against me when I stood before the Sanhedrin,
21 unless it were to do with this single claim, when I stood up among them and called out, "It is about the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today."

22 At this, Felix, who was fairly well informed about the Way, adjourned the case, saying, 'When Lysias the tribune comes down I will give judgement about your case.'

23 He then gave orders to the centurion that Paul should be kept under arrest but free from restriction, and that none of his own people should be prevented from seeing to his needs.

24 Some days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla who was a Jewess. He sent for Paul and gave him a hearing on the subject of faith in Christ Jesus.

25 But when Paul began to treat of uprightness, self-control and the coming Judgement, Felix took fright and said, 'You may go for the present; I will send for you when I find it convenient.'

26 At the same time he had hopes of receiving money from Paul, and for this reason he sent for him frequently and had talks with him.

27 When two years came to an end, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus and, being anxious to gain favour with the Jews, Felix left Paul in custody.

MONDAY

Three days after his arrival in the province, Festus went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea.

The chief priests and leaders of the Jews informed him of the case against Paul,

urgently asking him to support them against him, and to have him transferred to Jerusalem. They were preparing an ambush to murder him on the way.

But Festus replied that Paul was in custody in Caesarea, and that he would be going back there shortly himself.

He said, 'Let your authorities come down with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, they can bring a charge against him.'

After staying with them for eight or ten days at the most, he went down to Caesarea and the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and had Paul brought in.

As soon as Paul appeared, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem surrounded him, making many serious accusations which they were unable to substantiate.

Paul's defence was this, 'I have committed no offence whatever against either Jewish law, or the Temple, or Caesar.'

Festus was anxious to gain favour with the Jews, so he said to Paul, 'Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and be tried on these charges before me there?'

But Paul replied, 'I am standing before the tribunal of Caesar and this is where I should be tried. I have done the Jews no wrong, as you very well know.

If I am guilty of committing any capital crime, I do not
ask to be spared the death penalty. But if there is no substance in the accusations these persons bring against me, no one has a right to surrender me to them. I appeal to Caesar.'

12 Then Festus conferred with his advisers and replied, `You have appealed to Caesar; to Caesar you shall go.'

13 Some days later King Agrippa and Bernice arrived in Caesarea and paid their respects to Festus.

14 Their visit lasted several days, and Festus put Paul's case before the king, saying, `There is a man here whom Felix left behind in custody,

15 and while I was in Jerusalem the chief priests and elders of the Jews laid information against him, demanding his condemnation.

16 But I told them that Romans are not in the habit of surrendering any man, until the accused confronts his accusers and is given an opportunity to defend himself against the charge.

17 So they came here with me, and I wasted no time but took my seat on the tribunal the very next day and had the man brought in.

18 When confronted with him, his accusers did not charge him with any of the crimes I had expected;

19 but they had some argument or other with him about their own religion and about a dead man called Jesus whom Paul alleged to be alive.

20 Not feeling qualified to deal with questions of this sort, I asked him if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem to be tried there on this issue.
21 But Paul put in an appeal for his case to be reserved for the judgement of the emperor, so I ordered him to be remanded until I could send him to Caesar.'

22 Agrippa said to Festus, `I should like to hear the man myself.' He answered, `Tomorrow you shall hear him.'

23 So the next day Agrippa and Bernice arrived in great state and entered the audience chamber attended by the tribunes and the city notables; and Festus ordered Paul to be brought in.

24 Then Festus said, `King Agrippa, and all here present with us, you see before you the man about whom the whole Jewish community has petitioned me, both in Jerusalem and here, loudly protesting that he ought not to be allowed to remain alive.

25 For my own part I am satisfied that he has committed no capital crime, but when he himself appealed to the emperor I decided to send him.

26 But I have nothing definite that I can write to his Imperial Majesty about him; that is why I have produced him before you all, and before you in particular, King Agrippa, so that after the examination I may have something to write.

27 It seems to me pointless to send a prisoner without indicating the charges against him.'

TUESDAY
Then Agrippa said to Paul, 'You have leave to speak on your own behalf.' And Paul held up his hand and began his defence:

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1 Then Agrippa said to Paul, 'You have leave to speak on your own behalf.' And Paul held up his hand and began his defence:
2 'I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, in that it is before you I am to answer today all the charges made against me by the Jews,
3 the more so because you are an expert in matters of custom and controversy among the Jews. So I beg you to listen to me patiently.
4 'My manner of life from my youth, a life spent from the beginning among my own people and in Jerusalem, is common knowledge among the Jews.
5 They have known me for a long time and could testify, if they would, that I followed the strictest party in our religion and lived as a Pharisee.
6 And now it is for my hope in the promise made by God to our ancestors that I am on trial,
7 the promise that our twelve tribes, constant in worship night and day, hope to attain. For that hope, Your Majesty, I am actually put on trial by Jews!
8 Why does it seem incredible to you that God should raise the dead?
9 'As for me, I once thought it was my duty to use every means to oppose the name of Jesus the Nazarene.
10 This I did in Jerusalem; I myself threw many of God's holy people into prison, acting on authority from the chief priests, and when they were being sentenced to death I cast
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my vote against them.
11 I often went round the synagogues inflicting penalties, trying in this way to force them to renounce their faith; my fury against them was so extreme that I even pursued them into foreign cities.
12 `On such an expedition I was going to Damascus, armed with full powers and a commission from the chief priests,
13 and in the middle of the day as I was on my way, Your Majesty, I saw a light from heaven shining more brilliantly than the sun round me and my fellow-travellers.
14 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, kicking against the goad."
15 Then I said, "Who are you, Lord?" And the Lord answered, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.
16 But get up and stand on your feet, for I have appeared to you for this reason: to appoint you as my servant and as witness of this vision in which you have seen me, and of others in which I shall appear to you.
17 I shall rescue you from the people and from the nations to whom I send you
18 to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light, from the dominion of Satan to God, and receive, through faith in me, forgiveness of their sins and a share in the inheritance of the sanctified."
19 `After that, King Agrippa, I could not disobey the heavenly vision.
20 On the contrary I started preaching, first to the people of Damascus, then to those of Jerusalem and all Judaean
territory, and also to the gentiles, urging them to repent and turn to God, proving their change of heart by their deeds.

21 This was why the Jews laid hands on me in the Temple and tried to do away with me.

22 But I was blessed with God's help, and so I have stood firm to this day, testifying to great and small alike, saying nothing more than what the prophets and Moses himself said would happen:

23 that the Christ was to suffer and that, as the first to rise from the dead, he was to proclaim a light for our people and for the gentiles.'

24 He had reached this point in his defence when Festus shouted out, `Paul, you are out of your mind; all that learning of yours is driving you mad.'

25 But Paul answered, `Festus, your Excellency, I am not mad: I am speaking words of sober truth and good sense. 26 The king understands these matters, and to him I now speak fearlessly. I am confident that nothing of all this comes as a surprise to him; after all, these things were not done in a corner.

27 King Agrippa, do you believe in the prophets? I know you do.'

28 At this Agrippa said to Paul, `A little more, and your arguments would make a Christian of me.'

29 Paul replied, `Little or much, I wish before God that not only you but all who are listening to me today would come to be as I am-except for these chains.'

30 At this the king rose to his feet, with the governor and Bernice and those who sat there with them.
31 When they had retired they talked together and agreed, 'This man is doing nothing that deserves death or imprisonment.'
32 And Agrippa remarked to Festus, 'The man could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar.'

WEDNESDAY

First Reading From the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 27:1-20)

1 When it had been decided that we should sail to Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion called Julius, of the Augustan cohort.
2 We boarded a vessel from Adramyttium bound for ports on the Asiatic coast and put to sea; we had Aristarchus with us, a Macedonian of Thessalonica.
3 Next day we put in at Sidon, and Julius was considerate enough to allow Paul to go to his friends to be looked after.
4 From there we put to sea again, but as the winds were against us we sailed under the lee of Cyprus,
5 then across the open sea off Cilicia and Pamphylia, taking a fortnight to reach Myra in Lycia.
6 There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship leaving for Italy and put us aboard.
7 For some days we made little headway, and we had difficulty in making Cnidus. The wind would not allow us to touch there, so we sailed under the lee of Crete off Cape
and struggled along the coast until we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the town of Lasea. 

A great deal of time had been lost, and navigation was already hazardous, since it was now well after the time of the Fast, so Paul gave them this warning, 

`Friends, I can see this voyage will be dangerous and that we will run considerable risk of losing not only the cargo and the ship but also our lives as well.' 

But the centurion took more notice of the captain and the ship's owner than of what Paul was saying; 

and since the harbour was unsuitable for wintering, the majority were for putting out from there in the hope of wintering at Phoenix-a harbour in Crete, facing south-west and north-west. 

A southerly breeze sprang up and, thinking their objective as good as reached, they weighed anchor and began to sail past Crete, close inshore. 

But it was not long before a hurricane, the `north-easter' as they call it, burst on them from across the island. 

The ship was caught and could not keep head to wind, so we had to give way to the wind and let ourselves be driven. 

We ran under the lee of a small island called Cauda and managed with some difficulty to bring the ship's boat under control. 

Having hauled it up they used it to undergird the ship; then, afraid of running aground on the Syrtis banks, they floated out the sea-anchor and so let themselves drift.
18 As we were thoroughly storm-bound, the next day they began to jettison the cargo,
19 and the third day they threw the ship's gear overboard with their own hands.
20 For a number of days both the sun and the stars were invisible and the storm raged unabated until at last we gave up all hope of surviving.

THURSDAY

First Reading From the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 27:21-44)

21 Then, when they had been without food for a long time, Paul stood up among the men. 'Friends,' he said, 'you should have listened to me and not put out from Crete. You would have spared yourselves all this damage and loss.
22 But now I ask you not to give way to despair. There will be no loss of life at all, only of the ship.
23 Last night there appeared beside me an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve,
24 and he said, "Do not be afraid, Paul. You are destined to appear before Caesar, and God grants you the safety of all who are sailing with you."
25 So take courage, friends; I trust in God that things will turn out just as I was told;
26 but we are to be stranded on some island.'
27 On the fourteenth night we were being driven one way and another in the Adriatic, when about midnight the crew sensed that land of some sort was near.
28 They took soundings and found twenty fathoms; after a short interval they sounded again and found fifteen fathoms.
29 Then, afraid that we might run aground somewhere on a reef, they dropped four anchors from the stern and prayed for daylight.
30 When the crew tried to escape from the ship and lowered the ship's boat into the sea as though they meant to lay out anchors from the bows, Paul said to the centurion and his men,
31 'Unless those men stay on board you cannot hope to be saved.'
32 So the soldiers cut the boat's ropes and let it drop away.
33 Just before daybreak Paul urged them all to have something to eat. 'For fourteen days', he said, 'you have been in suspense, going hungry and eating nothing.
34 I urge you to have something to eat; your safety depends on it. Not a hair of any of your heads will be lost.'
35 With these words he took some bread, gave thanks to God in view of them all, broke it and began to eat.
36 They all plucked up courage and took something to eat themselves.
37 In all we were two hundred and seventy-six souls on board that ship.
38 When they had eaten what they wanted they lightened the ship by throwing the corn overboard into the sea.
39 When day came they did not recognise the land, but they could make out a bay with a beach; they planned to run the ship aground on this if they could.
40 They slipped the anchors and let them fall into the sea, and at the same time loosened the lashings of the rudders; then, hoisting the foresail to the wind, they headed for the beach.
41 But the cross-currents carried them into a shoal and the vessel ran aground. The bows were wedged in and stuck fast, while the stern began to break up with the pounding of the waves.
42 The soldiers planned to kill the prisoners for fear that any should swim off and escape.
43 But the centurion was determined to bring Paul safely through and would not let them carry out their plan. He gave orders that those who could swim should jump overboard first and so get ashore,
44 and the rest follow either on planks or on pieces of wreckage. In this way it happened that all came safe and sound to land.

FRIDAY


1 Once we had come safely through, we discovered that the island was called Malta.
The inhabitants treated us with unusual kindness. They made us all welcome by lighting a huge fire because it had started to rain and the weather was cold.

Paul had collected a bundle of sticks and was putting them on the fire when a viper brought out by the heat attached itself to his hand.

When the inhabitants saw the creature hanging from his hand they said to one another, 'That man must be a murderer; he may have escaped the sea, but divine justice would not let him live.'

However, he shook the creature off into the fire and came to no harm,

although they were expecting him at any moment to swell up or drop dead on the spot. After they had waited a long time without seeing anything out of the ordinary happen to him, they changed their minds and began to say he was a god.

In that neighbourhood there were estates belonging to the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius. He received us and entertained us hospitably for three days.

It happened that Publius' father was in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him, and after a prayer he laid his hands on the man and healed him.

When this happened, the other sick people on the island also came and were cured;

they honoured us with many marks of respect, and when we sailed they put on board the provisions we needed.

At the end of three months we set sail in a ship that had wintered in the island; she came from Alexandria and her
figurehead was the Twins.
12 We put in at Syracuse and spent three days there; 13 from there we followed the coast up to Rhegium. After one day there a south wind sprang up and on the second day we made Puteoli, 14 where we found some brothers and had the great encouragement of staying a week with them. And so we came to Rome.

SATURDAY

First Reading From the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 28:15-31)

15 When the brothers there heard about us they came to meet us, as far as the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns. When Paul saw them he thanked God and took courage.
16 On our arrival in Rome Paul was allowed to stay in lodgings of his own with the soldier who guarded him.
17 After three days he called together the leading Jews. When they had assembled, he said to them, `Brothers, although I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans.
18 They examined me and would have set me free, since
they found me guilty of nothing involving the death penalty;
19 but the Jews lodged an objection, and I was forced to appeal to Caesar, though not because I had any accusation to make against my own nation.
20 That is why I have urged you to see me and have a discussion with me, for it is on account of the hope of Israel that I wear this chain.'
21 They answered, 'We have received no letters from Judaea about you, nor has any of the brothers arrived here with any report or story of anything to your discredit.
22 We think it would be as well to hear your own account of your position; all we know about this sect is that it encounters opposition everywhere.'
23 So they arranged a day with him and a large number of them visited him at his lodgings. He put his case to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them about Jesus, arguing from the Law of Moses and the prophets from early morning until evening;
24 and some were convinced by what he said, while the rest were sceptical.
25 So they disagreed among themselves and, as they went away, Paul had one last thing to say to them, 'How aptly the Holy Spirit spoke when he told your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah:
26 Go and say to this people: Listen and listen but never understand! Look and look but never perceive!
27 This people's heart is torpid, their ears dulled, they have shut their eyes tight, to avoid using their eyes to see, their
ears to hear, using their heart to understand, changing their ways and being healed by me.

28 `You must realise, then, that this salvation of God has been sent to the gentiles;
29 and they will listen to it.'

30 He spent the whole of the two years in his own rented lodging. He welcomed all who came to visit him,
31 proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ with complete fearlessness and without any hindrance from anyone.

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PENTECOST

First Reading From the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans (Rom. 8:5-27)

5 Those who are living by their natural inclinations have their minds on the things human nature desires; those who live in the Spirit have their minds on spiritual things.
6 And human nature has nothing to look forward to but death, while the Spirit looks forward to life and peace,
7 because the outlook of disordered human nature is opposed to God, since it does not submit to God's Law, and indeed it cannot,
8 and those who live by their natural inclinations can never be pleasing to God.
9 You, however, live not by your natural inclinations, but
by the Spirit, since the Spirit of God has made a home in you. Indeed, anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.

10 But when Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin but the spirit is alive because you have been justified;

11 and if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead has made his home in you, then he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your own mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you.

12 So then, my brothers, we have no obligation to human nature to be dominated by it.

13 If you do live in that way, you are doomed to die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the habits originating in the body, you will have life.

14 All who are guided by the Spirit of God are sons of God;

15 for what you received was not the spirit of slavery to bring you back into fear; you received the Spirit of adoption, enabling us to cry out, `Abba, Father!'

16 The Spirit himself joins with our spirit to bear witness that we are children of God.

17 And if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, provided that we share his suffering, so as to share his glory.

18 In my estimation, all that we suffer in the present time is nothing in comparison with the glory which is destined to be disclosed for us,

19 for the whole creation is waiting with eagerness for the children of God to be revealed.
20 It was not for its own purposes that creation had frustration imposed on it, but for the purposes of him who imposed it-
21 with the intention that the whole creation itself might be freed from its slavery to corruption and brought into the same glorious freedom as the children of God.
22 We are well aware that the whole creation, until this time, has been groaning in labour pains.
23 And not only that: we too, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we are groaning inside ourselves, waiting with eagerness for our bodies to be set free.
24 In hope, we already have salvation; in hope, not visibly present, or we should not be hoping-nobody goes on hoping for something which is already visible.
25 But having this hope for what we cannot yet see, we are able to wait for it with persevering confidence.
26 And as well as this, the Spirit too comes to help us in our weakness, for, when we do not know how to pray properly, then the Spirit personally makes our petitions for us in groans that cannot be put into words;
27 and he who can see into all hearts knows what the Spirit means because the prayers that the Spirit makes for God's holy people are always in accordance with the mind of God.

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TRINITY SUNDAY
1 Now when I came to you, brothers, I did not come with any brilliance of oratory or wise argument to announce to you the mystery of God.
2 I was resolved that the only knowledge I would have while I was with you was knowledge of Jesus, and of him as the crucified Christ.
3 I came among you in weakness, in fear and great trembling
4 and what I spoke and proclaimed was not meant to convince by philosophical argument, but to demonstrate the convincing power of the Spirit,
5 so that your faith should depend not on human wisdom but on the power of God.
6 But still, to those who have reached maturity, we do talk of a wisdom, not, it is true, a philosophy of this age or of the rulers of this age, who will not last long now.
7 It is of the mysterious wisdom of God that we talk, the wisdom that was hidden, which God predestined to be for our glory before the ages began.
8 None of the rulers of the age recognised it; for if they had recognised it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory;
9 but it is as scripture says: What no eye has seen and no ear has heard, what the mind of man cannot visualise; all
that God has prepared for those who love him;
10 to us, though, God has given revelation through the
Spirit, for the Spirit explores the depths of everything, even
the depths of God.
11 After all, is there anyone who knows the qualities of
anyone except his own spirit, within him; and in the same
way, nobody knows the qualities of God except the Spirit
of God.
12 Now, the Spirit we have received is not the spirit of the
world but God's own Spirit, so that we may understand the
lavish gifts God has given us.
13 And these are what we speak of, not in the terms learnt
from human philosophy, but in terms learnt from the Spirit,
fitting spiritual language to spiritual things.
14 The natural person has no room for the gifts of God's
Spirit; to him they are folly; he cannot recognise them,
because their value can be assessed only in the Spirit.
15 The spiritual person, on the other hand, can assess the
value of everything, and that person's value cannot be
assessed by anybody else.
16 For: who has ever known the mind of the Lord? Who
has ever been his adviser? But we are those who have the
mind of Christ.

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CORPUS CHRISTI

First Reading From the Book of Exodus (Exodus 24:1-11)
1 He then said to Moses, `Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel and bow down at a distance.
2 Moses alone will approach the Lord; the others will not approach, nor will the people come up with him.'
3 Moses went and told the people all the Lord's words and all the laws, and all the people answered with one voice, `All the words the Lord has spoken we will carry out!'
4 Moses put all the Lord's words into writing, and early next morning he built an altar at the foot of the mountain, with twelve standing-stones for the twelve tribes of Israel.
5 Then he sent certain young Israelites to offer burnt offerings and sacrifice bullocks to the Lord as communion sacrifices.
6 Moses then took half the blood and put it into basins, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar.
7 Then, taking the Book of the Covenant, he read it to the listening people, who then said, `We shall do everything that the Lord has said; we shall obey.'
8 Moses then took the blood and sprinkled it over the people, saying, `This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you, entailing all these stipulations.'
9 Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and seventy elders of Israel then went up,
10 and they saw the God of Israel beneath whose feet there was what looked like a sapphire pavement pure as the heavens themselves,
11 but he did no harm to the Israelite notables; they actually gazed on God and then ate and drank.

SACRED HEART

First Reading From the Letter of St. Paul to the Romans (Rom. 8:28-39)

28 We are well aware that God works with those who love him, those who have been called in accordance with his purpose, and turns everything to their good.
29 He decided beforehand who were the ones destined to be moulded to the pattern of his Son, so that he should be the eldest of many brothers;
30 it was those so destined that he called; those that he called, he justified, and those that he has justified he has brought into glory.
31 After saying this, what can we add? If God is for us, who can be against us?
32 Since he did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for the sake of all of us, then can we not expect that with him he will freely give us all his gifts?
33 Who can bring any accusation against those that God has chosen? When God grants saving justice
34 who can condemn? Are we not sure that it is Christ Jesus, who died-yes and more, who was raised from the dead and is at God's right hand-and who is adding his plea
for us?
35 Can anything cut us off from the love of Christ—can hardships or distress, or persecution, or lack of food and clothing, or threats or violence;
36 as scripture says: For your sake we are being massacred all day long, treated as sheep to be slaughtered?
37 No; we come through all these things triumphantly victorious, by the power of him who loved us.
38 For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nothing already in existence and nothing still to come, nor any power,
39 nor the heights nor the depths, nor any created thing whatever, will be able to come between us and the love of God, known to us in Christ Jesus our Lord.