

Baptism of the Lord (Cycle A)

First Reading: Isaiah 42:1-4, 6-7

This section of the Book of Isaiah contains the words of a prophet who spoke to God's people exiled in Babylon. Four different times, the prophet speaks about a mysterious servant who will one day deliver the Israelites and make them great again. Christians have traditionally identified Jesus as this servant.

Second Reading: Acts 10:34-38

The Apostle Peter was originally skeptical about preaching the Gospel to non-Jews. But one day, the Holy Spirit summoned him to preach to a Gentile -- the pagan army officer Cornelius and his household. This passage presents Peter reflecting about the remarkable effect this experience had upon him personally.

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A)

First Reading: Isaiah 49:3, 5-6

The book of Isaiah in four different places speaks of a mysterious servant of God. This servant is sent to do great and marvelous things that touch the entire world. Christians have traditionally thought of Jesus as the fulfillment of these passages.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:1-3

For the next several Sundays our second reading will be taken from the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians. Today's reading presents the opening words of that letter. It is an example of the salutation used in classical letter writing: Paul identifies himself, acknowledges the community to whom he is writing, and extends warm personal greetings.

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A)

First Reading Isaiah 8:23-9, 3

Zebulun and Naphtali were two Jewish tribes who had settled in the northern area of the Holy Land. Eight centuries before Christ, this area experienced a bitter defeat at the hands of Assyria. The prophet Isaiah offers these defeated people hope by looking ahead to a day when they would be especially blessed. This northern area of the Holy Land was later known as Galilee, and Christians have seen Jesus as fulfilling this prophecy.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul deals with issues the Church faces in every age. After Paul had founded this community and moved on, he heard of polarizations among the Corinthian Christians. In today's passage, he speaks bluntly to them about these divisions.

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A)

First Reading: Zephaniah 2:3, 3:12-13

Zephaniah was a prophet who lived 700 years before Christ. These were bad times for Israel, marked by idolatry and unfaithfulness to the law. In today's passage, we will hear the prophet call the people to become part of a *remnant*, that is, a select few who would carry their holy tradition into future generations.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

The majority of early Christians were of the lower class. When Paul left the Greek city of Corinth (a major seaport of the ancient world), he was succeeded by Apollos, who was apparently a more polished preacher. Paul grew concerned that the Corinthian Christians were becoming more captivated with oratory than with the heart of the Gospel message.

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A)

First Reading: Isaiah 58:7-10

The Jewish people had just returned from exile in Babylon. They were poor. The prophet in today's reading reminds them of the religious practice that pleases God most of all, and he encourages them to share the little they have with one another.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

In this reading, Paul continues to address the problem of factions in Corinth. One group followed a Christian named Apollos, an eloquent preacher who came there after Paul had left. Some criticized Paul because his oratory didn't compare with that of Apollos. In today's passage, Paul defends his preaching style.

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A)

First Reading: Sirach 15:15-20

The book of Sirach was written by a wise teacher who lived 200 years before Christ. Sirach ran a school for young people in Jerusalem. In today's passage, he urges his students to make the right choices in life.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:6-10

Paul continues to address the Corinthian community, who criticized him because, according to Greek standards, he lacked wisdom. To the Greeks, wisdom meant a certain pattern of logical reasoning that followed fixed forms. In this reading, Paul speaks of a wisdom that is far greater than this.

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A)

First Reading: Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18

We are reading today from the third book of the Bible, Leviticus, which is a collection of Jewish laws. Today's passage discusses how to treat your neighbor. For Old Testament people, a neighbor was a fellow Israelite. (When we listen to today's *Gospel*, we will hear Jesus take this a step further.)

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 3:16-23

In this reading, Paul continues to address the problem of factions in Corinth. One group followed Apollos, an eloquent preacher who came there after Paul had left. Another group was loyal to Kephas (which is the Aramaic name for Peter). Paul uses an unusual image to explain why such factions don't belong in a Christian community.

Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A)

First Reading: Isaiah 49:14-15

This section of the book of Isaiah deals with a time when the Jewish people were in exile in Babylon and were complaining that God had forgotten them. God responds to this, and it is one of the times when we hear God speak as a mother. (It is helpful to know that the word "Zion" used in this passage often refers to Jerusalem, or the Jewish people.)

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 4:1-5

In today's reading, Paul continues to address a major problem in the Corinthian Church. Personality cults had developed and people were attaching themselves to various preachers — some to Paul, some to Peter, some to Apollos. Paul responds that all ministers of the Gospel work on *God's* behalf — not their own.

Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A)

First Reading: Deuteronomy 11:8, 26-28

In today's reading, we learn of the origin of the Jewish practice of wearing a phylactery, which is a tiny box containing a piece of paper with the heart of the Jewish law written on it. Even today some Jewish people wear such a box strapped to their forehead, and another to their forearm when they pray.

Second Reading: Romans 3:21-25, 28

[If the 9th Sunday occurs before Lent, omit the first sentence of this introduction.] Today and for many Sundays hereafter, our second reading will be taken from Paul's letter to the Romans. In writing the letter to the Romans, Paul is dealing with a community he had not yet visited. Many of them were converts from Judaism who believed they would be saved by how they lived out the Jewish law. Paul clearly states that it is not this law with its 613 precepts that produces salvation. Rather, our salvation comes through Jesus Christ, in whom we place our faith.

Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A)

First Reading: Hosea 6:3-6

Hosea was a prophet who lived about 750 years before Christ, a time when many people had been unfaithful to God by worshiping at pagan shrines. In the first two sentences of today's reading, Hosea speaks to God on behalf of the Israelite people. Then in the rest of the passage, the prophet conveys God's response.

Second Reading: Romans 4:18-25

[If this is a year when Ordinary Time after the Easter Season begins with this Sunday, it would be good to begin today's introduction with the following sentence: Today and for many Sundays hereafter, our second reading will be taken from Paul's letter to the Romans.] One of the themes of Paul's letter to the Romans is that it is not the Jewish law with its 613 precepts that produces salvation. Rather, it is Jesus Christ in whom we place our faith. In today's passage Paul holds up Abraham and Sarah as examples of salvation by faith.

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A)

First Reading: Exodus 19:2-6

The book of Exodus tells of the Israelites' escape from Egypt and their journey to Mount Sinai some 1200 years before Christ. In today's passage, the stage is set for the Old Testament's most dramatic encounter between God and the chosen people.

Second Reading: Romans 5:6-11

*[If this is a year when Ordinary Time after the Easter Season begins with this Sunday, it would be good to begin today's introduction with the following sentence: **Today and for many Sundays hereafter, our second reading will be taken from Paul's letter to the Romans.**] The theme of today's section from Paul's letter to the Romans is the great theological question of how sinners can be united with God who is all holy. Paul presents the Christian answer to this question.*

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A)

First Reading: Jeremiah 20:10-13

The prophet Jeremiah lived about 600 years before Christ. He prophesied that Israel, because of its unfaithfulness to God, would be defeated by Babylon. When this began to happen, many of his friends and neighbors denounced him as a traitor and turned on him.

Second Reading: Romans 5:12-15

*[If this is a year when Ordinary Time after the Easter Season begins with this Sunday, it would be good to begin today's introduction with the following sentence: **Today and for many Sundays hereafter, our second reading will be taken from Paul's letter to the Romans.**] Paul's letter to the Romans is his most detailed and important theological work. His purpose in this passage is not to teach about original sin, but to contrast Adam and Christ. From Adam we inherited a strong pull toward sin. From Christ (the "new Adam") we received a gift that is incomparably stronger: Divine grace.*

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A)

First Reading: 2 Kings 4:8-11, 14-16

Elisha, who lived about 800 years before Christ, succeeded the great prophet Elijah, and was noted for his miraculous deeds. Today we hear of one such deed performed in gratitude for the hospitality given to him and his servant Gehazi.

Second Reading: Romans 6:3-4, 8-11

*[If this is a year when Ordinary Time after the Easter Season begins with this Sunday, it would be good to begin today's introduction with the following sentence: **Today and for many Sundays hereafter, our second reading will be taken from Paul's letter to the Romans.**] In a previous section of his letter to the Romans, Paul taught that we sinners are reconciled to God through the death and resurrection of Jesus. Now Paul notes that we experience this dying and rising when, in the immersion form of baptism, we are symbolically "buried" in the water and emerge to new life.*

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A)

First Reading: Zechariah 9:9-10

In the last centuries before Christ, the Jewish people hoped for a triumphant Messiah king. The prophet Zechariah spoke instead of a Messiah who would come not in splendor and glory with horses and chariots, but rather in meekness and peace, riding a common work animal. All four evangelists will later apply this passage to the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem several days before his arrest.

Second Reading: Romans 8:9, 11-13

*[If this is a year when Ordinary Time after the Easter Season begins with this Sunday, it would be good to begin today's introduction with the following sentence: **Today and for many Sundays hereafter, our second reading will be taken from Paul's letter to the Romans.**] Today we will begin five Sundays of readings from chapter eight of Paul's letter to the Romans, a chapter which emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit. Paul wants us to remember that the Spirit who will raise our bodies on the last day is the same Spirit who inspires us to holiness every day. Today Paul offers a sharp contrast between life in the flesh (meaning *life prone to sin*) and life in the Spirit.*

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A)

First Reading: Isaiah 55:10-11

Because the Israelites were exiled in the pagan land of Babylon, the assuring words that God had previously spoken to them now seemed empty. In today's passage, the prophet Isaiah will use an image from nature to describe how God's word always bears fruit and comes true no matter how unlikely it may seem.

Second Reading: Romans 8:18-23

As we continue reading from the eighth chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans, he tells us that sin affected not only human beings but also all creation, and the coming of Christ had a healing effect on *both*. It is evident that Paul is not pessimistic about this world.

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A)

First Reading: Wisdom 12:13, 16-19

The book of Wisdom was written about 50 years before Christ. In one lengthy section of this book, the author looks back to the wonderful things God did for the Jewish people during the exodus. In today's passage from that section, the author speaks directly to God with words of praise.

Second Reading: Romans 8:26-27

We continue today to read from the eighth chapter of the letter to the Romans, in which Paul discusses the role of God's Spirit in our life. Today's brief reading gives us a remarkable insight into prayer.

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A)

First Reading: 1 Kings 3:5, 7-12

King Solomon ruled about 950 years before Christ. His wisdom was legendary. Today's reading describes an event from early in Solomon's rule that tells how he became a wise person.

Second Reading: Romans 8:28-30

As we continue our readings from the eighth chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans, we will today hear Paul use the word *predestined*. This word does not mean that individuals are locked into a destiny over which they have no control. Rather, it means that in Christ, God provides abundant grace for everyone.

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle A)

First Reading: Isaiah: 55:1-3

Today's reading is from a part of the book of Isaiah written when the Jewish people were exiled in Babylon. This section is often referred to as the "book of comfort" because of the encouragement it gives. Today's passage is a glorious finale to this "book of comfort": Poor people are being invited to a sumptuous banquet.

Second Reading: Romans 8:35, 37-39

Today's reading concludes the eighth chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans. This chapter reflects on the salvation brought about by God in and through Jesus. Paul concludes this chapter with a jubilant hymn that celebrates the love of God expressed in Christ.