

Feasts which may replace Sundays

Presentation of Jesus in the Temple (Feb. 2)

First Reading: Malachi 3:1-4

The book of Malachi was written after the Jews returned from exile in Babylon. The prophet expresses God's displeasure because the people have grown lax in their religious practices. (It may be helpful to know that the term "Sons of Levi" describes temple priests and functionaries.)

Second Reading: Hebrews 2:14-18

Death was thought by biblical people to be the work of the devil, and not intended by God. Today's passage from the letter to the Hebrews tells how Christ entered fully into human life even to the point of suffering and death.

Nativity of John the Baptist (June 24)

First Reading: Isaiah 49:1-6

The book of Isaiah in four different places speaks of a mysterious servant of God. In today's passage, the servant is described as called from his mother's womb. The parallel with John the Baptist is clear.

Second Reading: Acts 13:22-26

In the Acts of the Apostles, Paul gives several major speeches. Today's passage is a small part of one of those speeches. It was chosen for this feast because it refers to John the Baptist.

SS. Peter and Paul (June 29)

First Reading: Acts 12:1-11

In the Gospels we frequently hear about "the Twelve," and among them, Peter, James and John are often singled out. In today's passage from the Acts of the Apostles, we will hear about the death of James, and the imprisonment of Peter.

Second Reading: 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

In our second reading, we hear the concluding lines of the second letter to Timothy. This letter was written in Paul's name sometime after his death. Today's passage depicts Paul's thoughts while he was in prison, awaiting martyrdom.

Feast of the Transfiguration (Aug. 6)

First Reading: Daniel 7: 9-10, 13-14

The book of Daniel was written 150 years before Christ, during a time when the Jews were experiencing fierce persecution. It is meant to encourage the people by telling heroic stories of a person named Daniel who lived many centuries earlier. Today's reading describes his vision of heaven, and is written in symbolic language — similar to the book of Revelation. The term "Son of Man" meant a human chosen by God for a special purpose. Christians have applied this vision to Jesus.

Second Reading: 2 Peter 1:16-19

The second letter of Peter was written approximately 100 years after Jesus' death and resurrection. It was written in Peter's name, a practice common at that time. Because, after all these years, Jesus had not yet returned in glory, some people lost faith that he would ever return. Today's passage describes the Transfiguration, to which Peter was an eyewitness. The author wants to reassure the people that what they believe about Jesus is true.

Feast of the Assumption (Aug. 15)

First Reading: Revelation 11:19, 12:1-6, 10

The book of Revelation was written about 95 A.D. to encourage people who were suffering persecution. It is written in symbolic language and uses many images — for example, a dragon to represent evil. In today's reading, the Church is depicted as a woman giving birth to the Messiah. As the years went by, this imagery was extended to Mary.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:20-26

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul addresses problems his converts in the community were experiencing. Some members of the community had questioned the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and their own resurrection as well. This passage is Paul's response.

Exaltation of the Holy Cross (Sept. 14)

First Reading: Numbers 21:4-9

The book of Numbers continues the story of the Israelites' journey from Egypt to the Promised Land. Today's passage tells of a time when the people were complaining during their journey. The incident described is one that we will hear Jesus use in the Gospel to describe the saving effects of his being lifted up on the cross.

Second Reading: Philippians 2:6-11

In the years following Christ's death and resurrection, Christians began to develop the prayers and hymns that would become part of their rituals. In today's passage from the letter to the Philippians, Paul appears to be quoting an early Christian hymn celebrating the dying and rising of Christ.

All Saints (Nov. 1)

First Reading: Revelation 7:2-4, 9-14

The Book of Revelation is not intended to predict actual people and events in future times. The author was concerned only about people and events in that time and was given no privileged information about the future. In today's passage, the author encourages people of that time by presenting a vision of God's people enjoying heavenly life.

Second Reading: 1 John 3:1-3

In our first reading, we heard symbolic images of what heaven will be like. The author of our second reading also talks about what heaven will be like, but without attempting to give us any specific details.

All Souls (Nov. 2)

First Reading: Daniel 12:1-3

The book of Daniel was written 150 years before Christ, when the Jews were experiencing fierce persecution. The author wanted to encourage them by telling heroic stories about a person named Daniel who lived many centuries earlier. For most of their history, Old Testament people believed only in, at best, a shadowy existence after death.

Second Reading: Romans 6: 3-9

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.

Dedication of St. John Lateran (Nov. 9)

First Reading: 1 Kings 8:22-23, 27-30

King Solomon ruled the Jewish nation about 950 years before Christ when it was at the height of its power and influence. Under his leadership a splendid temple was erected in Jerusalem. Today's reading is part of the prayer Solomon offered at its dedication.

Second Reading: 1 Peter 2:4-9

The first letter of Peter was written to a Christian community that felt alienated from their pagan neighbors. Today the author reminds them that they belong to a special group of people, the people of God.