

Baptism of the Lord (Cycle C)

First Reading: Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11

This passage from the book of Isaiah begins with God calling the prophet to encourage the Jewish people exiled in Babylon. He is to tell them that they will be returning home soon, and the road of the return will pass through the desert. We will also hear God call the *people* to proclaim from a mountaintop the goodness of God.

Second Reading: Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7

The letter to Titus was written about 30 years after Paul's death, and was written in Paul's name, a practice common in the ancient world. Titus was a traveling companion of Paul, and later was in charge of a Christian community on the island of Crete. The verses we are about to hear are also read at Masses on Christmas.

Second Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle C)

First Reading: Isaiah 62:1-5

The last part of the book of Isaiah contains the words of a prophet who lived after the Jews returned from exile in Babylon six centuries before Christ. Upon their return, they found their temple destroyed and the city of Jerusalem leveled. Still, the prophet sees a wonderful future for them because God loves them so much. Note the beautiful image he uses to describe that love.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:4-11

Today, and for the next few weeks, our second reading will be from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Corinth was a busy cosmopolitan seaport located in the central part of modern-day Greece. Here, Paul addresses problems his converts are experiencing as they live a Christian life in this non-Christian environment.

Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle C)

First Reading: Nehemiah 8:2-6, 8-10

The book of Nehemiah recounts events which happened about 100 years after the Jewish people had returned from the Babylonian exile. After their initial religious fervor, the people's moral life and commitment to God's law had lapsed. So, Ezra the priest challenged the people to renew their commitment to the law, and conducted what would be called today a "religious revival".

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:12-30

Today we continue our reading from the first letter of Paul to the Christians in Corinth, an important seaport. He was answering a letter they had written to him, containing questions about Christian life in their community. Among the questions was how to deal with the diversity of gifts within the community, and the rivalries and jealousies that inevitably arise. He responds by using an image that the Catholic Church has particularly emphasized.

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle C)

First Reading: Jeremiah 1:4-5, 17-19

Today we hear about Jeremiah's call to be a prophet. It came when he was quite young. It also came at a time of turmoil when Babylon was in the process of conquering the entire Near East. That's why Jeremiah felt uneasy about the call. God, however, refuses to take "no" for an answer.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13

We will recognize today's passage from first Corinthians as one that is often read at weddings. Actually, the context is not marriage, but squabbles in the Christian community in Corinth over whose spiritual gifts were most important. Paul goes to the heart of the matter.

Fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle C)

First Reading: Isaiah 6:1-8

The prophet Isaiah lived about 750 years before Christ. His enthusiastic response to God's call led to a prophetic career that lasted over 40 years. In this brief passage, we find not only the source for the "Holy, Holy" in the Mass, but also the prayer before reading the Gospel (asking God to cleanse one's lips), and finally the refrain from a frequently used contemporary hymn.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

We continue our reading from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. Some members of the community had questioned the bodily resurrection of Jesus, and our own resurrection as well. This passage is Paul's response. It pre-dates the Gospels and is the oldest written record of the Church's core tradition about Christ's resurrection.

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle C)

First Reading: Jeremiah 17:5-8

In the last years before the crushing defeat of Jerusalem and the exile of many of its citizens to Babylon, Jeremiah watched the people destroying themselves through materialism and unfaithfulness to God. Here he sets before them a clear choice.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20

In last week's reading from first Corinthians, we heard the oldest written record of the Church's core tradition about Christ's resurrection. Today's passage follows directly from that, as Paul addresses concerns about our own resurrection.

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle C)

First Reading: 1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23

In this reading we hear of Saul and David. Saul became the first king of Israel, about 1,000 years before Christ. David, best known for slaying Goliath, was also a talented musician and became one of the favorites at Saul's court. Eventually the king grew jealous of the popular David who had to flee for his life.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:45-49

Paul's converts at Corinth had a lot of questions about life after death, and on the last two Sundays we've heard Paul addressing these. Today he uses a parallel. Just as we receive our human life from our ancestors — ultimately Adam — so we receive risen life from Jesus, who could be called the "new Adam".

Eighth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle C)

First Reading: Sirach 27:4-7

The book of Sirach was written by a wise teacher who lived 200 years before Christ. It is a loose collection of wise sayings dealing with various concerns in the life of a believer. In today's section, we hear Sirach's thoughts about how speech is the measure of a person.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:54-58

This is the last of our seven weeks of readings from first Corinthians. In recent weeks, we have heard Paul addressing the Corinthian converts' questions about life after death. Paul ends his teaching on the resurrection with this hymn of triumph over death.

Ninth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle C)

First Reading: 1 Kings 8:41-43

King Solomon was the son of David, and lived about 1,000 years before Jesus. During his 43-year reign, the Jewish nation enjoyed its greatest prosperity and it was during this time that the Jerusalem temple was built. Today's reading is part of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of this temple.

Second Reading: Galatians 1:1-2, 6-10

Galatia was a Roman province in central Turkey. Some time after Paul had preached the Gospel there, other Christians came who insisted that to be a good Christian one also had to follow the Jewish law and be circumcised. When news of this reached Paul, he was very upset. Today as we listen to the first verses of this letter, we will get a sample of the vehemence that characterizes his response.

Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle C)

First Reading: 1 Kings 17:17-24

The prophet Elijah lived about 800 years before Christ. After predicting a drought which did, in fact, take place, God directed him to the pagan city of Zarephath. There, despite a severe famine, a widow provided food for him for a year. Today's reading picks up from there.

Second Reading: Galatians 1:11-19

Galatia was a Roman province in central Turkey, where Paul had preached the Gospel. Today's reading is autobiographical. Paul defends his teaching, pointing out that he did not receive the Gospel secondhand but directly from the Risen Jesus.

Eleventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle C)

First Reading: 2 Samuel 12:7-10

Today's passage concludes the well-known story of David's sin of adultery with Bathsheba and also the sin of arranging the death of her husband Uriah. Nathan the prophet confronts David with these sins.

Second Reading: Galatians 2:1, 19-21

(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 sentence: Galatia was a Roman province in central Turkey.)

Continuing our reading from Paul's letter to the Galatians, we will hear the central theme of this letter. Paul clearly states 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.

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle C)

First Reading: Zechariah 12:10-11

The prophet Zechariah preached after the Jews returned from exile. This brief passage we will hear today is puzzling. A person is depicted as suffering and dying for the people, but we don't know who it is. In the Gospel of John, this passage is applied to Jesus on the Cross, pierced with a lance.

Second Reading: Galatians 4:31b-5:1, 13-18

(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 sentence: Galatia was a Roman province in central Turkey.)

Today we hear one of the most famous passages from Paul's letter to the Galatians. In that culture and at that time, it was a remarkable statement against any form of ethnic, religious or gender discrimination.

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle C)

First Reading: 1 Kings 19:16, 19-21

Elijah lived about 800 years before Jesus, and was revered as the greatest prophet in Jewish history, even though he left no written records. In today's passage, he is nearing the end of his life, and God instructs him to anoint a successor.

Second Reading: Galatians 5:1, 13-18

Some time after Paul had preached the Gospel in Galatia, other Christians came who insisted that to be a good Christian one also had to follow the Jewish law and be ritually circumcised. This caused great dissension in the Church there. In today's passage, Paul reaffirms their freedom from the law, and pleads for greater harmony.

Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle C)

First Reading: Isaiah 66:10-14

The last part of the book of Isaiah contains the words of a prophet who lived after the Jews returned from exile in Babylon. In today's reading (which is a poem), the prophet sees a bright future for Jerusalem, and uses the image of God as a mother.

Second Reading: Galatians 6:14-18

In Galatia, a group of Christians attacked Paul's credentials as an apostle and accused him of false teaching because he said people can be saved without abiding by the Jewish law. In this passage from the end of his letter to the Galatians, Paul defends his right to teach, and stresses that faith in the law has been replaced by faith in Jesus.

Fifteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle C)

First Reading: Deuteronomy 30:10-14

The events in this reading take place as the Israelites are camped on the shore of the Jordan River, ready to enter the Promised Land. Moses makes it clear to the people that they are expected to remain faithful to the Lord after they have settled in their new land.

Second Reading: Colossians 1:15-20

Today and for three more Sundays, the second reading will be from the letter to the Colossians. This letter responds to a widespread belief that God ruled the world through the mediation of angels who were given their own powers. The author quotes an early Christian hymn that emphasizes that Jesus is the one and only mediator between God and the world.

Sixteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle C)

First Reading: Genesis 18:1-10

Chapters 12 to 25 of Genesis contain narratives about Abraham and Sarah, our father and mother in faith. Today the couple is visited by mysterious messengers from God. With customary Middle-Eastern hospitality, Abraham and Sarah lavishly welcome and feed the visitors who, in turn, promise something wonderful.

Second Reading: Colossians 1:24-28

The letter to the Colossians was written around 80 A.D. to Christians who lived at Colossae, a city in what is today Turkey. A major emphasis of this letter is that Christ is the source of every grace and blessing that come to human beings.

Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle C)

First Reading: Genesis 18:20-32

Today's passage from Genesis is another episode from the life of Abraham, our father in faith. He lived near Sodom, a city notorious for its wickedness. In this passage, Abraham employs the Middle-Eastern technique of bartering to negotiate with God over the future of that city.

Second Reading: Colossians 2:12-14

Today we continue our series of four readings from the letter to the Colossians. We have seen how this letter emphasizes Christ as the sole mediator between God and all creation. Today's passage speaks of how we become one with Christ.

Eighteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time (Cycle C)

First Reading: Ecclesiastes 1:2, 2:21-23

Ecclesiastes is one of the seven books in the Old Testament referred to as Wisdom books. Wisdom literature reflects on how to live in this world in a way that is pleasing to God. The author of this book calls himself *Qoheleth*, a term that perhaps means "teacher". Qoheleth has a pessimistic view of life, in part because he doesn't believe in life after death. The wisdom he teaches is that one should not be burdened by anxieties, but rather live each day as a gift from God.

Second Reading: Colossians 3:1-5, 9-11

In our previous readings from Colossians, we have seen how Christ is the only mediator between God and the world, and how our baptism has made us one with Christ. The author will today remind us of the heights to which Christ has raised us, and then call upon us to live up to this.