
The St. James
Daily Devotional Guide
for the Christian Year



Winter 2018 - 2019
December 2nd - March 2nd

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ST. JAMES DAILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE (USPS number 0023-205) is published in March, June, September, and December by The Fellowship of St. James, located at 4125 W. Newport Ave., Chicago, IL 60641-4009. Periodicals Postage Paid At Chicago, IL and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Fellowship of St. James, P.O. Box 410788, Chicago, IL 60641-0788.

SINGLE SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

U.S.: \$19.95 one year (4 issues); \$34.95 two years (8 issues)
Canada: \$26.95 one year; \$47.95 two years
Other countries: \$27.95 one year; \$48.95 two years

BULK RATES (U.S. & Canada only):

U.S.: 2-5 copies: \$14.95 each per year
6-9 copies, \$12.50
10-19 copies, \$9.95
20+ copies, \$8.50
Canada: 2-5 copies: \$21.95 each per year
6-9 copies, \$18.50
10-19 copies, \$15.95
20+ copies, \$13.95

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE:

St. James Daily Devotional Guide
Subscription Services
P.O. Box 2026
Langhorne, PA 19047
OR CALL TOLL-FREE: 1-800-283-8333

PUBLISHER:

The Fellowship of St. James
P.O. Box 410788
Chicago, IL 60641
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Volume 23, Number 1

The Fellowship of St. James
Chicago, Illinois
2018

Using This Guide

Under each day's heading there are four parts:

- (1) A Gospel reading, recommended for morning devotion;
- (2) A second reading, usually from the New Testament, recommended for evening devotion;
- (3) Morning and Evening Psalms (set respectively before and after a small symbol †); and
- (4) A daily chapter, usually from the Old Testament, to be read whenever convenient.

Morning Psalms may be begun with the following versicle:

*Lord, open Thou my lips,
and my mouth shall declare Thy praise.*

and **Evening Psalms** with this versicle:

*O God, make haste to deliver me;
O Lord, make haste to help me.*

This is followed in each instance by the *Gloria Patri* either sung or spoken in some form, such as:

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son,
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever
shall be, unto the ages of ages. Amen.*

The Psalms may be read, spoken, or said responsively, followed by a prayer (such as that given with each week).

Following the prayer (whether at Morning or Evening Psalms) the appropriate Bible section may be read. After this, there may be a time of intercessory prayer for personal needs and the needs of others or similar petitions (see page 19), and a benediction (see page 20). Following a very ancient tradition of the Church (already in the *Didache* by A.D. 100), we recommend that the Lord's Prayer *always* be part of these devotions.

The reading listed last each day—the *daily chapter*—may be read at any time during the day, including at morning or evening prayer. But if time is spent not only to read but also to study the passage, it may be more natural to do so separately. As you go through the two-year cycle of Bible readings, you will want to become familiar with each biblical book by reading the introduction to that book in the notes at the back of the guide.

The Daily Bible Readings

The traditional “lectionaries,” or systematic readings, of Holy Scripture are of two kinds: (1) *lectio continua*, which means reading a given book of the Bible straight through, from start to finish, over a certain period of time; and (2) *lectio selecta*, which means that particular readings are chosen for particular days or special reasons, without the intention of reading all of a given book of the Bible. Both methods are inherited from Judaism and have been in constant use among Christians from the beginning.

Each method has its own merits. The “continuous reading” guarantees that whole books of Holy Scripture will be read within the contexts of their literary integrity and specific theological perspectives. The “select reading” picks biblical passages that are appropriate to special days or seasons in the Christian calendar or specified themes of our life in Christ.

Believers have long been persuaded that a judicious combination of the two methods constitutes the best approach to reading Holy Scripture. If we were to use only the first method, for example, we might find that our Bible reading on Christmas or Easter concerned Samson’s various fights with the Philistines, making us wonder if this weren’t something of a distraction. So we pick specific readings suitable to those special days: *lectio selecta*. Similarly, if we constantly picked selections from the Bible and always read them apart from their contexts within the biblical canon, we would eventually lose touch with the integrity of the various biblical books as such. There is a distinct advantage in reading, say, the book of Genesis, or Daniel, or Mark straight through, in order to grasp it in its fullness: *lectio continua*.

Our Method

The lectionary system used in this *Devotional Guide* employs both traditional methods. Moreover, the readings are arranged with certain goals in mind: (1) that some section of the Gospels be read every day; (2) that every part of the New Testament be read at least once every year; (3) that the entire Old Testament be read over each two-year period; (4) that readings of the Holy Scriptures occasionally be juxtaposed in order for them to throw light on one another; (5) that a certain respect be shown to the ancient lectionary traditions of the churches, according to which certain parts of Holy Scripture are normally read during certain seasons; and (6) that special consideration be given to the Book of Psalms as a normal component of daily Christian prayer. It will be useful to say a word or two on each of these points.

1. The Daily Gospel Reading

The four Gospels have always enjoyed a certain preeminence in the Christian mind, because they concentrate on “the things that Jesus did and said” (Bernard of Clairvaux). “Surely everything our Savior did and said,” wrote John Henry Newman, “is characterized by mingled simplicity and mystery.” It is very significant that the word “Gospel,” which originally meant “the Christian message,” early—at least by the second century, long before the New Testament canon was formally determined—came to be applied to a specific type of literature, of which the New Testament contains four examples. If one has time for only one biblical reading each day, the prescribed section from the Gospels makes a special claim to be that reading. One may read the Gospel at any time during the day, but ancient custom assigns it to the morning. For consistency’s sake we habitually list it first. On a few days, especially in festal seasons, we give two readings from the Gospels.

2. The New Testament Readings

Before any of the four Gospels was written, most of the apostolic epistles were already widespread and well known. Beginning with First Thessalonians about the year 50, these letters were read within the regular weekly assemblies of Christians. They were copied and sent from church to church. To these were added, in due course, the books of Revelation (which also contains seven apostolic letters) and the Acts of the Apostles. The claim of this literature on the Christian mind is just as strong today as it was then.

3. The Old Testament Readings

Exclusive of the Book of Psalms, the Hebrew Scriptures (which is the Old Testament canon among Protestant Christians) contains 757 chapters. At one chapter each day, a reader will finish 730 chapters over a two-year period. (The remaining 27 chapters will be distributed in other parts of the lectionary.) This “daily chapter” will be the longest reading each day and may be done whenever convenient. As opportunity permits, there will also be readings from those books found only in the Greek Old Testament. In Protestant Bibles these books are known as the Apocrypha; in Roman Catholic and Orthodox Bibles, these books do not form a separate section but are spread throughout the entire text, intermixed with the other books.

4. Juxtaposition of Biblical Texts

Within the limits compatible with the three foregoing goals, certain readings will be chosen on certain days with a view to throwing light on some other reading assigned for that day. This method of reading Holy Scripture is amply justified within the New Testament itself, where both Jesus and the Apostles appeal to the Old Testament by way of instruction on some part of the Christian message. No firm rule will be used to determine these selected readings. Sometimes a Gospel reading or an Epistle will be chosen to accompany the “daily chapter,” sometimes another Old Testament text to accompany the Gospel sequence, sometimes a special insertion on a following day, etc.

5. Seasonal Readings

Even in pre-Christian times the Jews had perceived a propriety in reading certain biblical passages at particular times of the year. Thus, the Song of Solomon was read at Passover, and Ruth at Pentecost. Similarly, Christians have long been fond of reading Genesis during Lent, for example, Isaiah during Advent and the Christmas season, and the Gospel of John during the time of Easter. In our own lectionary some respect will be shown to such traditions about seasons and special days.

6. The Psalms

The Psalter is the Old Testament book most quoted in the New Testament and has been considered an essential, non-replaceable part of Christian prayer from the very beginning. Two sections from the Psalms are assigned for each day, one for morning and one for evening, mainly (but not slavishly) following the pattern outlined in *The Book of Common Prayer* currently used by the Episcopal Church.

More Commentary

Readers who would like to pursue the study of the assigned biblical texts more carefully are encouraged to consult our website (www.touchstonemag.com/daily_reflections), where they will find the “Daily Bible Reflections,” which offer more extensive and detailed comments on one of the assigned biblical readings for each day. Indeed, in order to provide sufficient space to publish new material in these pages, several of the standard introductions to various biblical books, already published in this *Daily Devotional Guide* in previous years, will be made available only at our web page. In each instance, this will be noted when appropriate.

DECEMBER 2 – 8, 2018

Almighty God, give us grace that we may cast away the works of darkness, and put upon us the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life, in which Thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when He shall come again in His glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through Him who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost. Amen.

THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

S	DECEMBER 2 <i>First Sunday of Advent</i>	Luke 19:41—20:8 Revelation 6:1-11 Psalms 146,147 † 111,112,113 <i>Daily Chapter: Isaiah 37</i>
M	DECEMBER 3 <i>Hezekiah's Prayer (See p. 21)</i>	Luke 20:20-40 Revelation 6:12-17 Psalms 1,2,3 † 4,7 <i>Daily Chapter: Isaiah 38</i>
T	DECEMBER 4 <i>Envoys from Babylon (See p. 21)</i>	Luke 20:41—21:4 Revelation 8:1-13 Psalms 5,6 † 10,11 <i>Daily Chapter: Isaiah 39</i>
W	DECEMBER 5 <i>The Comforting of Israel</i>	Luke 21:5-24 Revelation 9:1-12 Psalms 119:1-24 † 12,13,14 <i>Daily Chapter: Isaiah 40</i>
T	DECEMBER 6 <i>The Assurance of Israel</i>	Luke 21:25-38 Revelation 9:13-21 Psalms 18:1-20 † 18:21-50 <i>Daily Chapter: Isaiah 41</i>
F	DECEMBER 7 <i>Introducing the Beloved Servant (See p. 21)</i>	Luke 22:1-13 Revelation 10:1-11 Psalms 16,17 † 22 <i>Daily Chapter: Isaiah 42</i>
S	DECEMBER 8 <i>Israel's Redeemer</i>	Luke 22:14-23 Revelation 11:1-19 Psalms 20,21 † 110,116,117 <i>Daily Chapter: Isaiah 43</i>

DECEMBER 9 – 15, 2018

Merciful God, who sent Thy messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation; grant us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

S	DECEMBER 9 <i>Second Sunday of Advent</i>	Luke 22:24–30 Revelation 12:1–17 Psalms 148,149,150 † 114,115 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Isaiah 44
M	DECEMBER 10 <i>Introducing Cyrus (See p. 22)</i>	Luke 22:31–38 Revelation 13:1–10 Psalms 25 † 9,15 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Isaiah 45
T	DECEMBER 11 <i>False Gods & the True</i>	Luke 22:39–46 Revelation 13:11–18 Psalms 26,28 † 36,39 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Isaiah 46
W	DECEMBER 12 <i>The Humbling of Babylon</i>	Luke 22:47–53 Revelation 14:1–13 Psalms 38 † 119:25–48 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Isaiah 47
T	DECEMBER 13 <i>Israel Purged</i>	Luke 22:54–62 Revelation 14:14–20 Psalms 37:1–18 † 37:19–42 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Isaiah 48
F	DECEMBER 14 <i>God's Servant & the Nations</i>	Luke 22:63–23:5 Revelation 15:1–8 Psalms 31 † 35 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Isaiah 49
S	DECEMBER 15 <i>God's Servant & Israel's Hope</i>	Luke 23:6–12 Revelation 16:1–11 Psalms 30,32 † 42,43 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Isaiah 50

DECEMBER 16 – 22, 2018

Stir up Thy power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let Thy bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with Thee, and the Holy Ghost, be honor and glory, world without end. Amen.

THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER
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S	DECEMBER 16 <i>Third Sunday of Advent</i>	Luke 23:13–25 Revelation 16:12–21 Psalms 63,98 † 103 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Isaiah 51
M	DECEMBER 17 <i>The Comfort of Zion</i>	Luke 23:26–43 Revelation 17:1–6 Psalms 41,52 † 44 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Isaiah 52
T	DECEMBER 18 <i>The Servant's Suffering & Death on the Cross</i>	Luke 23:44–56 Revelation 17:7–18 Psalms 45 † 47,48 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Isaiah 53
W	DECEMBER 19 <i>The Covenant of Peace</i>	Luke 1:1–25 Revelation 18:1–24 Psalms 119:49–72 † 49,53 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Isaiah 54
T	DECEMBER 20 <i>The Coming Abundant Life</i>	Luke 1:26–38 Revelation 19:1–10 Psalms 50 † 59,60 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Isaiah 55
F	DECEMBER 21 <i>The King of Kings (See p. 24)</i>	Luke 1:39–56 Revelation 19:11–21 Psalms 40,54 † 51 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Isaiah 56
S	DECEMBER 22 <i>The Futility of the Idols</i>	Luke 1:57–66 Revelation 20:1–15 Psalms 55 † 138,139 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Isaiah 57

DECEMBER 23 – 29, 2018

O God, who makest us glad with the yearly remembrance of Thy only Son Jesus Christ; grant that as we joyfully receive Him for our Redeemer, so may we with sure confidence behold Him when He shall come to be our Judge; who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

S	DECEMBER 23 <i>The Last Sunday of Advent</i>	Luke 1:67–80 Revelation 21:1–8 Psalms 24,29 † 8,84 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Isaiah 58
M	DECEMBER 24 <i>Christmas Eve (See p. 25)</i>	Matthew 1:1–17 Hebrews 1:1–14 Psalms 45,46 † 89:1–29 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Isaiah 59
T	DECEMBER 25 <i>The Birth of Our Lord (See p. 25)</i>	Luke 2:1–20 Hebrews 2:1–18 Psalms 2,8 † 110,132 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Isaiah 60
W	DECEMBER 26 <i>The Feast of Saint Stephen</i>	Matthew 1:18–25 Acts 6:8—8:3 Psalms 28,30 † 118 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Isaiah 61
T	DECEMBER 27 <i>The Feast of Saint John</i>	John 21:15–25 1 John 1:1—2:2 Psalms 97,98 † 145 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Isaiah 62
F	DECEMBER 28 <i>The Holy Innocents</i>	Matthew 2:1–23 Jeremiah 31:10–17 Psalms 2,26 † 19,126 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Isaiah 63
S	DECEMBER 29 <i>Rending the Heavens (See p. 27)</i>	Matthew 24:45–51 Revelation 21:9–27 Psalms 18:1–20 † 18:21–50 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Isaiah 64

DECEMBER 30, 2018 — JANUARY 5, 2019

Almighty and everlasting God, who hast made known the Incarnation of Thy Word by the testimony of a glorious star, which when the wise men beheld, they adored Thy majesty with gifts; grant that the star of Thy righteousness may always appear in our hearts, and our treasure consist in giving thanks to Thee. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE GELASIAN SACRAMENTARY

S	DECEMBER 30	Matthew 25:14–30
	<i>The Sunday After Christmas</i>	Revelation 22:1–11 Psalms 93,96 † 34 <i>Daily Chapter: Isaiah 65</i>
M	DECEMBER 31	Matthew 25:31–46
	<i>The End of Time</i>	Revelation 22:12–21 Psalms 46,48 † 90 <i>Daily Chapter: Isaiah 66</i>
T	JANUARY 1	John 1:1–18
	<i>In the Beginning (See p. 27)</i>	1 John 2:3–11 Psalms 103 † 148 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 1</i>
W	JANUARY 2	John 1:19–28
	<i>In the Garden</i>	Romans 5:1–11 Psalms 34 † 33 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 2</i>
T	JANUARY 3	John 1:29–34
	<i>The Fall (See p. 28)</i>	Romans 5:12–21 Psalms 68 † 72 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 3</i>
F	JANUARY 4	John 1:35–51
	<i>The Fratricide</i>	1 John 3:4–15 Psalms 85,87 † 89:1–29 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 4</i>
S	JANUARY 5	Matthew 3:1–12
	<i>The Offspring of Adam & Eve</i>	Hebrews 11:1–7 Psalms 2,110 † 29,98 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 5</i>

JANUARY 6 – 12, 2019

Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, as we are bathed in the new light of Thine incarnate Word, that what shines by faith in our minds may also blaze out in our lives. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE GREGORIAN SACRAMENTARY
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S	JANUARY 6 <i>The Epiphany to the Magi (See p. 30)</i>	Matthew 2:1–11 2 Peter 2:4–11 Psalms 46,97 † 96,100 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Genesis 6
M	JANUARY 7 <i>The Epiphany at the Baptism (See p. 30)</i>	Matthew 3:13–17 1 Peter 3:13–22 Psalms 103 † 114,115 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Genesis 7
T	JANUARY 8 <i>The Epiphany at the Wedding (See p. 31)</i>	John 2:1–12 1 John 2:15–23 Psalms 117,118 † 112,113 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Genesis 8
W	JANUARY 9 <i>The Covenant with Noah</i>	Matthew 4:12–17 1 John 2:24—3:3 Psalms 121,122,123 † 131,132 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Genesis 9
T	JANUARY 10 <i>The International Genealogy</i>	Matthew 4:18–25 1 John 3:16–23 Psalms 138,139 † 147 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Genesis 10
F	JANUARY 11 <i>The Tower of Babel</i>	Matthew 5:1–12 1 John 3:24—4:11 Psalms 148,150 † 91,92 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Genesis 11
S	JANUARY 12 <i>The Migration of Abraham</i>	Matthew 5:13–20 Hebrews 6:1–8 Psalms 98,99,100 † 104 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Genesis 12

JANUARY 13 – 19, 2019

Grant, Almighty God, that we may be able continually to shake off the yoke of Egyptian servitude and sin, and to appear before Thy majesty in our heavenly country; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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AMBROSIAN COLLECT
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S	JANUARY 13 <i>First Sunday after Epiphany</i>	Matthew 5:21–32 Hebrews 6:9–20 Psalms 146,147 † 111,112,113 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 13</i>
M	JANUARY 14 <i>The Priesthood of Melchizedek (See p. 32)</i>	John 8:13–20 Hebrews 7:1–10 Psalms 1,2,3,110 † 4,7 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 14</i>
T	JANUARY 15 <i>The Freedom of the Truth</i>	John 8:21–36 Hebrews 11:8–16 Psalms 5,6 † 10,11 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 15</i>
W	JANUARY 16 <i>The Seed of Abraham</i>	John 8:37–47 Romans 4:1–12 Psalms 119:1–24 † 12,13,14 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 16</i>
T	JANUARY 17 <i>The Gladness of Abraham</i>	John 8:48–59 Romans 4:13–25 Psalms 18:1–20 † 18:21–50 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 17</i>
F	JANUARY 18 <i>The Intercession of Abraham</i>	Matthew 5:33–48 1 John 4:12–21 Psalms 16,17 † 22 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 18</i>
S	JANUARY 19 <i>The Cities of the Plain</i>	Matthew 6:1–15 1 John 5:1–13 Psalms 20,21 † 110,116,117 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 19</i>

JANUARY 20 – 26, 2019

O Christ, Word of the Father most high, who wast made flesh to dwell among us, enter Thou into our hearts, we beseech Thee, that we who have been redeemed by the mystery of Thine Incarnation, may remain united in the communion of peace eternal. Amen.

MOZARABIC COLLECT
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S	JANUARY 20 <i>Second Sunday After Epiphany</i>	Matthew 6:16–24 1 John 5:14–21 Psalms 148,149,150 † 114,115 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 20</i>
M	JANUARY 21 <i>Two Women, Two Sons</i>	Matthew 6:25–34 Galatians 4:21–31 Psalms 25 † 9,15 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 21</i>
T	JANUARY 22 <i>The Sacrifice of Isaac</i>	Matthew 7:1–12 Hebrews 11:17–29 Psalms 26,28 † 36,39 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 22</i>
W	JANUARY 23 <i>The Passing of Sarah</i>	Matthew 7:13–20 Hebrews 11:30—12:2 Psalms 38 † 119:25–48 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 23</i>
T	JANUARY 24 <i>Isaac's Bride (See p. 33)</i>	Matthew 7:21–29 Hebrews 12:3–11 Psalms 37:1–18 † 37:19–42 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 24</i>
F	JANUARY 25 <i>The Birthright</i>	Matthew 8:1–4 Hebrews 12:12–24 Psalms 31 † 35 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 25</i>
S	JANUARY 26 <i>Isaac & Abimelech</i>	Matthew 8:5–13 Hebrews 12:25—13:6 Psalms 30,32 † 42,43 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 26</i>

JANUARY 27 — FEBRUARY 2, 2019

Grant, we beseech Thee, almighty God, that we who seek the grace of Thy protection, being delivered from all evils, may serve Thee in quietness of mind. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

LEONINE COLLECT
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S	JANUARY 27 <i>Third Sunday After Epiphany</i>	Matthew 8:14–22 Hebrews 3:1–11 Psalms 95,63,98 † 103 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 27</i>
M	JANUARY 28 <i>Understanding Psalm 95 (See p. 35)</i>	Matthew 8:23–34 Hebrews 3:12–19 Psalms 95,41,52 † 44 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 28</i>
T	JANUARY 29 <i>Jacob & Rachel</i>	Matthew 9:1–8 Hebrews 4:1–13 Psalms 95,45 † 47,48 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 29</i>
W	JANUARY 30 <i>Rachel & Leah</i>	Matthew 9:9–13 Hebrews 4:14—5:4 Psalms 119:49–72 † 49,53 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 30</i>
T	JANUARY 31 <i>Jacob's Second Flight</i>	Matthew 9:14–17 Hebrews 5:5–14 Psalms 50 † 59,60 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 31</i>
F	FEBRUARY 1 <i>The Wrestling Match (See p. 37)</i>	Matthew 9:18–26 Hebrews 7:11–28 Psalms 40,54 † 113,122 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 32</i>
S	FEBRUARY 2 <i>The Presentation in the Temple (See p. 38)</i>	Luke 2:22–40 Haggai 2:1–9 Psalms 42,43 † 48,87 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 33</i>

FEBRUARY 3 – 9, 2019

Look mercifully, O Good Shepherd, on Thy flock; and suffer not the sheep that Thou hast redeemed by Thy precious blood to be torn to pieces by the assaults of the devil. For in Thy holy name we pray. Amen.

LEONINE/SARUM COLLECT
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S	FEBRUARY 3 <i>Fourth Sunday After Epiphany</i>	Matthew 9:27–38 Hebrews 8:1–13 Psalms 24,29 † 8,84 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Genesis 34
M	FEBRUARY 4 <i>The Death of Rachel</i>	Matthew 10:1–15 Hebrews 9:1–10 Psalms 56,57,58 † 64,65 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Genesis 35
T	FEBRUARY 5 <i>The Family of Esau (See p. 39)</i>	Matthew 10:16–26 Hebrews 9:11–22 Psalms 61,62 † 68 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Genesis 36
W	FEBRUARY 6 <i>The Well- Dressed Dreamer</i>	Matthew 10:27–33 Hebrews 9:23—10:4 Psalms 72 † 119:73–96 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Genesis 37
T	FEBRUARY 7 <i>The Wiles of Tamar</i>	Matthew 10:34–42 Hebrews 10:5–18 Psalms 70,71 † 74 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Genesis 38
F	FEBRUARY 8 <i>Joseph in Egypt</i>	Matthew 11:1–6 Hebrews 10:19–39 Psalms 69 † 73 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Genesis 39
S	FEBRUARY 9 <i>The Prisoners’ Dreams</i>	Matthew 11:7–15 Hebrews 13:7–25 Psalms 75,76 † 23,27 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Genesis 40

FEBRUARY 10 – 16, 2019

We beseech Thee, O Lord, mercifully to correct our wanderings, and by the guiding radiance of Thy compassion to bring us to the salutary vision of Thy truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE GOTHIC MISSAL
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S	FEBRUARY 10 <i>Fifth Sunday After Epiphany</i>	Matthew 11:16–24 Romans 1:1–17 Psalms 93,96 † 34 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 41</i>
M	FEBRUARY 11 <i>The Brothers Go to Egypt</i>	Matthew 11:25–30 Romans 1:18–32 Psalms 80 † 77,79 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 42</i>
T	FEBRUARY 12 <i>The Disclosure of Joseph</i>	Matthew 12:1–8 Romans 2:1–16 Psalms 78:1–39 † 78:40–72 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 43</i>
W	FEBRUARY 13 <i>Judah & His Father (See p. 41)</i>	Matthew 12:9–14 Romans 2:17–29 Psalms 119:97–120 † 81,82 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 44</i>
T	FEBRUARY 14 <i>The Revelation of Joseph (See p. 42)</i>	Matthew 12:15–21 Romans 3:1–8 Psalms 83 † 85,86 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 45</i>
F	FEBRUARY 15 <i>Jacob Descends to Egypt</i>	Matthew 12:22–30 Romans 3:9–20 Psalms 88 † 91,92 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 46</i>
S	FEBRUARY 16 <i>Joseph & the Famine</i>	Matthew 12:31–37 Romans 3:21–31 Psalms 87,90 † 136 <i>Daily Chapter: Genesis 47</i>

FEBRUARY 17 – 23, 2019

Lord Jesus Christ, who for the redemption of the world didst ascend the wood of the cross, that Thou mightest enlighten the whole world that lay in darkness; pour that light, we pray Thee, into our hearts and bodies, whereby we may be enabled to the light eternal, O Thou who livest and reignest with the Father and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE SARUM MISSAL

S	FEBRUARY 17 <i>Sixth Sunday After Epiphany</i>	Matthew 12:38–45 Romans 6:1–14 Psalms 66,67 † 19,46 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Genesis 48
M	FEBRUARY 18 <i>The Oracles of Jacob</i>	Matthew 12:46–50 Romans 6:15–23 Psalms 89:1–18 † 89:19–52 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Genesis 49
T	FEBRUARY 19 <i>The Death of Joseph</i>	Matthew 13:1–9 Romans 7:1–12 Psalms 97,99,100 † 94,95 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Genesis 50
W	FEBRUARY 20 <i>The Prophecy of Nahum (See p. 43)</i>	Matthew 13:10–17 Romans 7:13–25 Psalms 101,109 † 119:121–144 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Nahum 1
T	FEBRUARY 21 <i>The Invasion of Nineveh</i>	Matthew 13:18–23 Romans 8:1–11 Psalms 105:1–22 † 105:23–45 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Nahum 2
F	FEBRUARY 22 <i>The Fall of Nineveh</i>	Matthew 13:24–30 Romans 8:12–30 Psalms 102 † 107:1–32 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Nahum 3
S	FEBRUARY 23 <i>The Book of Proverbs (See p. 45)</i>	Matthew 13:31–35 Romans 8:31–39 Psalms 107:33–43,108 † 33 <i>Daily Chapter:</i> Proverbs 1

FEBRUARY 24 — MARCH 2, 2019

Inflame our hearts with love for Thee, O Christ our God, that loving Thee with all our heart, with all our mind, with all our soul, and with all our strength, and our neighbors as ourselves, we may obey Thy commandments and glorify Thee, the Giver of all good gifts. Amen.

EASTERN ORTHODOX PRAYER
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S	FEBRUARY 24 <i>Seventh Sunday After Epiphany</i>	Matthew 13:36–43 Romans 9:1–13 Psalms 118 † 145 <i>Daily Chapter: Proverbs 2</i>
M	FEBRUARY 25 <i>Guidance in Wisdom</i>	Matthew 13:44–52 Romans 9:14–26 Psalms 106:1–18 † 106:19–48 <i>Daily Chapter: Proverbs 3</i>
T	FEBRUARY 26 <i>Security in Wisdom</i>	Matthew 13:53–58 Romans 9:27–33 Psalms 120—123 † 124—127 <i>Daily Chapter: Proverbs 4</i>
W	FEBRUARY 27 <i>La Femme Fatale</i>	Matthew 14:1–12 Romans 10:1–13 Psalms 119:145–176 † 128,129,130 <i>Daily Chapter: Proverbs 5</i>
T	FEBRUARY 28 <i>Several Serious Cautions</i>	Matthew 14:13–21 Romans 10:14–21 Psalms 131,132,133 † 134,135 <i>Daily Chapter: Proverbs 6</i>
F	MARCH 1 <i>The Way to Destruction (See p. 46)</i>	Matthew 14:22–33 Romans 11:1–10 Psalms 130,142 † 141,143 <i>Daily Chapter: Proverbs 7</i>
S	MARCH 2 <i>The Glories of Wisdom (See p. 47)</i>	Matthew 14:34—15:11 Romans 11:11–24 Psalms 137,144 † 104 <i>Daily Chapter: Proverbs 8</i>

PRAYERS FOR WINTER

Prayers in light of the ministry of salvation

These intercessions can be used for general prayer and meditation or augmented with more specific and personal petitions.

Heavenly Father, you sent your Son to be the Light of the world and bring salvation to all. We offer now our prayers and intercessions for the needs of all and the progress of your gospel; and so we pray: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

For the oppressed, the afflicted, and suffering of the world, that He who looks upon his children with compassion may impart peace, health, and salvation, we pray: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

For those who do not believe, and those who have fallen away, that a saving faith may be kindled in their hearts, we pray: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

For the peace of our troubled world and all her people, that evil and violence may be restrained, and that peace and justice may prevail, we pray: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

For all those who govern our country and our city, that they may govern with wisdom in these troubled times, with compassion for those in need, and with justice for all, we pray: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

For the holy catholic Church, that she may be faithful to the gospel, and manifest the Light of Jesus Christ to all men through her good works and in all her teaching, we pray: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

For our community and all our people, that God would bless us, keep us, and watch over us, that we may fulfill his will and obtain his good favor, we pray: *Lord, hear our prayer.*

A SHORTER PETITION

It is suggested that besides offering up such intercessions at one point in the day (whether morning or evening), it is good to pray correspondingly at the other time of day a prayer like the following:

Heavenly Father, show us your mercy and grant us your salvation. Bless and keep your Church in all righteousness. Give peace, O Lord, in all the world, and keep this nation under your care. Let not the needy be forgotten, nor the hope of the poor taken away; in Christ's name we pray. *Amen.*

CLOSING PRAYERS

THE LORD'S PRAYER

And now, O Lord, give us the grace to pray confidently in the words our Savior taught us, saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.
For Thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory, for ever. *Amen.*

CONCLUDING PRAYER

O Lord, watch over us and grant us Your grace that we may grow in the knowledge of Your only Son, and may one day behold Him in the glory of the heavenly kingdom, full of grace and truth, in whose name we pray. *Amen.*

[*or*]

O God, may we manifest Jesus Christ in all that we do. Guide us and protect us that we may come at last into the glory of Your presence, being found well-pleasing in Your sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord, we pray. *Amen.*

BENEDICTION

To end Morning Prayer:

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort our hearts and establish them in every good work and word; to whom be glory for ever.

To end Evening Prayer:

May the God of peace sanctify us wholly; and may our spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever.

*In the Name of the Father, and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

NOTES—WINTER 2018–2019

December 3. Hezekiah's Prayer (Isaiah 38)

Several biblical saints, in situations of great stress, prayed to die. Not Hezekiah. Like most of the Old Testament characters, he knew little of the afterlife, and the little he knew was not encouraging. Most of all, the king observed that the dead stopped attending the worship in the Temple, and *that* was a great loss. The dead, as far as Hezekiah could discern, were not able to praise God. “The underworld (Sheol) cannot render thanks to Thee,” he tells God, “nor can death praise Thee. Those who go down in the grave abandon all hope of Thy truth.”

These sentiments are found frequently in the Book of Psalms. Early in the book, for instance, the choirmaster prays, “For in death there is no remembrance of Thee / In the grave who will give Thee thanks?” (Psalms 6:5). Although there are Old Testament passages that express aspirations for the afterlife, these generally refer to a final resurrection, rather than a spiritual immortality. No saint of the Old Testament was ever told, “Today you will be with me in paradise.”

December 4. Envoys from Babylon (Isaiah 39)

This story introduces the reader to Babylonians. Hezekiah, living during the zenith of Assyrian ascendancy, could never have guessed the risk involved in his showing-off the treasures of Judah to these Babylonian ambassadors. Babylon, at the time, was a small kingdom allied to the Assyrian Empire. Isaiah, however, whose prophetic insight looked into the future, perceived that the Babylonians would someday return, this time to take Judah into captivity.

The brief oracle in this chapter, which prophesies the Babylonian Captivity, is the link that joins the two large sections of Isaiah. Tomorrow we read the famous oracle that foretells the *end* of that Captivity.

December 7. Introducing the Beloved Servant

At Jesus' baptism, when the Father addressed him as “beloved Son” and declared himself “well pleased,” these expressions were not entirely—if the word be allowed—*original*. Indeed, they evoked in the mind of Jesus two biblical texts with which he was already familiar from those years of study in the synagogue. These two passages likewise pertained to the more ample message Jesus heard that day.

The first text conveyed the electrifying word spoken by the Lord to Abraham: “Take now your son, your only one, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you” (Genesis 22:2). The memory of this dramatic story, evoked by the “voice from heaven,” beckoned Jesus to assume in his own life the sacrificial role of Isaac. Thus, in the beginning of his ministry, our Lord is already summoned to consider the tragic events that will end it. Prior to proclaiming a single word of the Gospel, Jesus receives an intimation of the Cross.

The reference to Isaac and his father in the baptismal scene is even more apparent if we consider the Greek (Septuagint) version of Genesis 22:2, where the Hebrew word for “only” (*yahid*) is changed to “beloved” (*agapetos*): “Take your beloved son, whom you love. . . .”

The “voice from heaven” at Jesus’ baptism evoked a second biblical text, likewise familiar to him. It came from the Book of Isaiah and introduced the appearance of God’s Servant. Indeed, this passage stands at the beginning of the Servant Songs. We have read the passage tonight: “Behold! My Servant whom I uphold; / My soul delights in my chosen one. / I have put my Spirit upon him” (Isaiah 42:1).

Although I have quoted this prophecy as it appears in the transmitted Hebrew (Masoretic) text, early Christians were familiar with another version of it, a translation closer to the words Jesus heard at his baptism. Matthew quotes the passage thus: “Behold! My Servant whom I have chosen, / My beloved [*agapetos*] in whom my soul is well pleased! / I will put my Spirit upon him” (12:18). Thus, even as the Holy Spirit descends on Jesus, and the Father refers to him as “Son,” the vocabulary of the scene recalls the Servant from the Book of Isaiah, the image which will largely determine, in due course, our Lord’s understanding of his redemptive role. The Father’s Son, the true Isaac, is identified as God’s Servant.

More and more, as the events of his life unfold—especially the conspiracy of his foes—Jesus sounds the depths of that identification. In straight lines, both images point to the Cross. In the experience of his baptism, then, our Lord received an earnest intimation of what it finally symbolized. The Gospel narrative will return to this motif in the later scene where Jesus foretells the strife and divisions attendant on the proclamation of the gospel: “I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!” (Luke 12:50; cf. Mark 10:38).

December 10. Introducing Cyrus

It is truly remarkable that God spoke of a pagan ruler, a Persian emperor, as “his anointed . . . Cyrus” (Isaiah 45:1) and called him “my shepherd”

(44:28). Perhaps the extraordinary distinction accorded to Cyrus by these references is set in greater relief if we recall that the Hebrew word for “anointed” is *messiah* (in Greek *christos*), and that when God otherwise speaks of “my anointed” in the Old Testament, the reference is to David or to Christ (Psalm 132[131]:17). The designation of Cyrus as “my shepherd,” likewise, puts the attentive reader in mind of David (cf. 2 Samuel 5:2; Psalm 78[77]:71). Who, then, was this Cyrus, of whom the Lord God speaks in these messianic and covenantal terms?

He was Cyrus II of Anshan, an ancient country within the territory of modern Iran. It lay to the northeast of the Fertile Crescent, just under the Caspian Sea. After the fall of Nineveh in 612 B.C., Anshan, traditionally subject to the Assyrians, became a vassal state of the Medes. In 550 its king, Cyrus II, defeated the Medes, thus becoming ruler of the entire empire of the Medes and Persians. In order to gain this ascendancy, Cyrus had accepted the help of the Babylonians, who apparently did not reflect that a victorious Cyrus would soon prove to be a greater threat to them than the Medes had ever been.

When their new danger did finally dawn on the Babylonians, they promptly formed a defensive pact with several countries, including Lydia, a kingdom situated in the west of the large peninsula that we now call Turkey. Before challenging Babylon, therefore, Cyrus determined it would be better to conquer Babylon’s ally, Lydia. Accordingly, the king of Lydia, Croesus, having received assurances of military help from Egypt and Sparta, prepared to move east against Cyrus.

Prior to making that move, however, King Croesus of Lydia resolved to seek an oracular word from the god Apollo, whose shrine was at Delphi, as well as from other sources of divination (Herodotus 1.46–47). It was apparently in reference to all this feverish oracular activity that the Book of Isaiah commented that God “frustrates the signs of the babblers, / And drives diviners mad” (44:25). At the time, in fact, many predictions were being made about the struggle soon to ensue (Herodotus 1.53–54; Isaiah 40:8; 47:12–13; 55:10–11).

On the strength of what Croesus learned, or, alas, *thought* he learned, from Apollo at Delphi, he prepared to attack Cyrus. Cyrus himself did not wait for his opponent to arrive. In the winter of 547/546 B.C. he launched his own attack, catching Croesus by surprise, taking his capital city of Sardis, and incorporating Lydia into his own growing empire.

The fall of Lydia struck panic among the Greeks (cf. Isaiah 41:5–6), who realized that rather soon they, too, would have to face the growing Persian Empire. (They would do so early in the following century, in the unforgettable battles of Marathon, Thermopylae, Salamis, and Plataea.) The panic of the Greeks, however, was nothing to that of the Babylonians.

They knew that they were next on Cyrus's list.

To the Jews, however, and other peoples oppressed by the Babylonians, the recent victory of Cyrus over Lydia augured their own deliverance, so they watched his military progress with no little excitement (cf. Isaiah 41:1–4). Over and over, Israel was told not to fear, because God was about to deliver them from the Babylonians (41:8–15; 43:1,5; 44:8; 51:7, 12; 54:4,14). They did not have to wait very long.

On October 13, 539, Cyrus captured Babylon by a shrewd tactical maneuver that immortalized his fame in military history (Herodotus 1.190–191). As we know from a record Cyrus left to posterity, an inscription on a clay barrel called the “Cyrus Cylinder,” this Persian ruler of Babylon promptly proclaimed himself a servant of the Babylonian sun god, Marduk. In the Bible, nonetheless, Cyrus is ever regarded as the historical instrument of the true God, Israel's God. It was Cyrus who brought the Babylonian Captivity to an end in 538, authorizing the return of the chosen people to their homeland, along with the restoration of the sacred vessels of Jerusalem's temple, which he ordered to be rebuilt (2 Chronicles 36:22–23; Ezra 1:1–8; 4:3; 5:13–17; 6:3). Even as Holy Scripture describes the Emperor Cyrus in terms otherwise associated with King David, this Gentile messiah—as it were—is rightly regarded as another type and foreshadowing of the true Messiah and Shepherd, Jesus the Lord, who delivers his people from a captivity more bitter than that of Babylon, restores them to the Promised Land, and builds for them a better temple.

December 21. The King of Kings (Revelation 19:11–21)

Jesus is here portrayed as a warrior on a white destrier. The emphasis is on his vindication of justice, the motif with which the chapter began. He is called “faithful and true,” adjectives referring to him in 3:14. These adjectives should be considered especially in the context of martyrdom. That is to say, when a person is about to die a terrible death for the name of Jesus, “faithful and true” are the words he needs to know with respect to Jesus. Like the martyrs, Jesus is here clothed in white. His eyes (v. 12) are flames of fire, much as in John's inaugural vision (1:12–16). His garment (v. 13) is spattered with blood, a detail we saw in 14:18–20. The literary inspiration of this portrayal is the canticle in Isaiah 63:1–3.

One of the Christological titles found here is “King of kings and Lord of lords” (v. 16), a title going back to the ancient Assyrian emperors, who were kings ruling over other kings. John tells us that this title appears on the “thigh,” of the Rider on the white horse. The thigh here is the place of the scabbard, where the sword hangs. It was common in antiquity to

speak of the thigh as the place of the sword. With regard to Achilles, for example, Homer wrote: "And anger came on Peleus's son, and within his shaggy breast the heart was divided two ways, pondering whether *to draw from his thigh the sharp sword*, driving away all those who stood between and kill the son of Atreus, or else to check his spleen within and keep down his anger" (*Iliad* 1.188–192). The same idiom is found in the *Odyssey* 11.231 and the *Aeneid* 10.788.

The exact idiom is likewise biblical; "Gird your sword on your thigh, every one of you," commanded Moses to the Levites (Exodus 32:27). The expression occurs twice in Judges 3 and in Psalms 45[44]:3. Finally, in the Song of Solomon there is a description of the sixty valiant men around the king, "each with his sword upon his thigh, against alarms by night" (3:8). The title on the Warrior's thigh, then, is inscribed on his scabbard.

The sword itself, however, is described as coming forth from his mouth, as in John's inaugural vision in the first chapter. This image, of course, identifies the sword with the word, as in Hebrews 4:12 and Ephesians 6:17. The image of God's word as a sword seems to have been very common among the early Christians, so we are not surprised to see it here. The Rider himself is called "the Word of God," in the only instance of this expression with reference to Jesus outside of the beginning of John's Gospel.

December 24. Christmas Eve

Over the next couple of months, our New Testament readings will be chosen chiefly from the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Epistle to the Romans, and the First Epistle of John. These readings, however, will be selected chiefly by specific appointment, rather than by sequence. That is to say, instead of reading them straight through, we will often read them because of their relationship to the feast of the day or the Old Testament selection for that day. Today and tomorrow, for instance, we read the opening chapters of Hebrews because of their message of the Incarnation. Three days from now, we will read the opening chapter of First John, because it is the feast of St. John. When we begin Genesis eight days from now, the various stories in that book will determine our readings from Hebrews and Romans. And so forth. Next year, these epistles will be read in their regular sequence.

December 25. The Birth of our Lord

In these Christmas verses from Hebrews we find our earliest extant Christian commentary on Psalm 8, which is a treatise on the Incarna-

tion. The question under consideration is “What is man?” or “What does it mean to be a human being?” In some recent translations of the Psalms, this question is treated merely as an introduction to anthropology.

According to the author of Hebrews, however, the reliable way to a correct anthropology—the accurate response to the question, “What is a human being?”—depends on the answer to a prior theological question: “What do you think of the Christ? Whose son is he?” In other words, the proper address to anthropology is through the gate of Christology. Psalm 8 is really about Christology.

The most correct wording of the dogma of the Incarnation is the one to which we are accustomed: “He became man.” This translation, which leaves the implied article undetermined, means Christ is the archetype of man, bearing all of humanity in himself. “It was for the new man that human nature was established from the beginning,” wrote St. Nicholas Kavalas; “the old Adam was not the model of the new, it was the new Adam that was the model of the old.” Christ is how the author of Hebrews approaches the subject of human beings.

This approach to anthropology, taken from Holy Scripture, is normative in Christian thought. According to the Christian faith, when God gave our forefather Adam dominion over the earth and its fullness, that act was a prophecy of the universal subjection of creation to the reign of Christ. Such is the true meaning of Psalm 8: “You have made him to have dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet.”

According to this perspective, Christ is no divine afterthought; he is the original meaning of humanity. Christ is what God had in mind when he reached down and formed that first lump of mud into a man. Again in the words of St. Nicholas Kavalas: “It was towards Christ that man’s mind and desire were oriented. We were given a mind that we might know Christ, and desire, that we might run to him; and memory, that we might remember him, because even at the time of creation it was he who was the archetype.”

According to this interpretation of Psalm 8, “we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that he, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.” That is to say, God’s Son assumed our flesh in order obediently to die in that flesh, and this is how the human race was redeemed.

In the second century, Irenaeus of Lyons followed the same theological line as the author of Hebrews, but he adorned it by introducing the Pauline contrast between Christ and Adam. According to Irenaeus, the Word’s assumption of the flesh was required for our salvation because Adam’s sin had been committed in the flesh. Sin in the flesh required

salvation in the flesh. He explained, “So the Word was made flesh in order that sin, destroyed by means of that same flesh through which it had gained mastery and taken hold and lorded it, should no longer be in us,” and “that so he might join battle on behalf of our forefathers and vanquish through Adam what had stricken us through Adam” (*Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* 31).

December 29. Rending the Heavens

When the prophet prays to God, “Oh, that you would *rend* the heavens and come down” (Isaiah 64:1), the metaphor evokes the image of the firmament as a large canopy or tent, made either of skins or of cloth. Earlier this month, that same prophet told us that God “stretches out the heavens like a canopy, and spreads them out like a tent to live in” (Isaiah 40:22; Psalms 104:2; Job 9:8). God rends it; he tears through it, in order to descend to the earth.

The same verb appears in Mark’s description of the Baptism of Jesus (on which we will reflect in these pages very soon): “And immediately, coming up from the water, [Jesus] saw the heavens rent and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove” (Mark 1:10). Mark employs the identical verb in his description of the death of Jesus: “Then the veil of the temple was rent in two from top to bottom” (15:38). In all these cases, the *rending*, the tearing, of the veil conveys the divine energy irrupting into the world from the divine presence.

January 1. In the Beginning

The opening words of the Fourth Gospel are clearly intended to evoke the beginning of Genesis, thus indicating that God’s preexistent and eternal Word is the active principle of Creation: the very first time God *said* something in Creation, he was speaking through the divine and personal Word who abode with him from all eternity. John shares this vision with other authors in the New Testament, most obviously Paul (Colossians 1:15–20) and the author of Hebrews (1:1–4). All three sources place this theological reflection near the beginning of their composition.

John’s first five verses are built around a double theme: the eternal life of God and the created being of the world. These aspects of the theme are distinguished by the tense and form of their respective verbs.

First, with respect to God, the verbal form is the imperfect tense (denoting continued action in past time) of the verb *eimi*, “to be.” Thus, in verses 1–2 we have:

In the beginning *was* the Word,
and the Word *was* with God,
and the Word *was* God.
He *was* in the beginning with God.

Second, with respect to Creation, the verbal form is the aorist tense (denoting a single time in the past) of the verb *gignomi*, “to become,” or “to come to be.” Thus, in verses 3–4 we have:

All things *came to be* through him,
and without him nothing *came to be*.
What *came to be* in him *was* life.

The noun “God” is used in two ways in the opening verses: First, it appears *with* the article (*ho Theos*), in a substantive sense, to refer to God the Father. Second, it appears *without* the article (*Theos*), in a predicate sense, to refer to the divine Word. Thus, “the Word was with God [*ton Theon*], and the Word was God [*Theos*]. He was in the beginning with God [*ton Theon*].”

With verses 6–8 we shift from eternity and Creation to history, and specifically the historical appearance of John the Baptist. John’s emergence on the historical scene was the starting point of the narrative contained in the witness of the apostles (cf. Acts 1:22; 10:37; 13:24). Luke was especially careful to place John’s appearance in a full historical context (Luke 3:1–2).

Once again, the form and tense of the verb changes to the aorist of *gignomi*, “to become.” Literally, verse 6 reads, “A man came to be whose name was John.” We note this wording in order to compare this verse to the references to Creation in the opening verses. A more felicitous English idiom would say, “There appeared a man named John.”

John comes in order to bear witness, as he will start to do in verse 19. He is the first of many “witnesses” of which the Fourth Gospel speaks: the woman of Samaria (4:39), the works of Jesus (5:36), the Scriptures (5:39), the crowds (12:17), the Holy Spirit and the disciples (15:26–27), the writer himself (21:24), and especially the Father (5:37). Here, then, John introduces a major motif of this Gospel.

January 3. The Fall (Genesis 3; Romans 5:12–21)

Today we read the account of Adam’s Fall, along with Paul’s interpretation of that misfortune. Paul writes of our first father, whose sin introduced death into the world. In the mind of Paul, our mortality *is* the

Fall that we sinners inherit from Adam. If, apart from Christ, sin reigns, “sin reigns in death” (Romans 5:21). By reason of Adam’s Fall, he argues, man without Christ is under the dominance of death and corruption, because “the reign of death only accomplishes the corruption of the flesh” (“*regnum mortis nihil operatur quam carnis dissolutionem*”; Tertullian, *On the Resurrection* 47).

In the death and resurrection of Christ, on the other hand, the energies of life and incorruption are unleashed. This is the foundation of Paul’s antithetical comparison of Christ and Adam.

Paul goes to Genesis 3 to explain what he calls “the reign of death” (vv. 14,17). In the Bible, death is not natural, nor is it merely biological, and certainly it is not neutral. Apart from Christ, death represents man’s final separation from God (v. 21; 6:21,23; 8:2,6,38). The corruption of death is sin incarnate and rendered visible.

When this “last enemy” (1 Corinthians 15:56) has finally been vanquished, then may we most correctly speak of “salvation.” This is why the vocabulary of salvation normally appears in Romans in the future tense. Because of men’s inheritance of Adam’s Fall, “all sinned.” The reign of death was present from Adam to Moses, but because the Law had not yet been given, men were not invariably held accountable for their transgressions (v. 13; 3:20; 4:15). No matter. They still died! Death reigned (v. 14).

Did the coming of the Mosaic Law improve the situation? Of course not. The Law not only failed to take away the reign of death, it made men more consciously aware of their fallen state (v. 20; Gal 3:13,19). Ironically, it was the spiritual quality of the Torah that rendered man’s situation worse: “For as the Law was spiritual, it emphasized sin but did not destroy it” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 3.18.7).

It was by way of antithesis that Adam prefigured Christ, the new Head of humanity, who introduces a life more abundant, more extensive, more powerful than Adam’s Fall (vv. 15–21). No matter how much sin abounded, grace and mercy abound the more. That is to say, Christ has more than made up the “shortfall” of Adam. The abundant mercy of God is demonstrated by the fact that the whole blighted history of man’s transgressions, because of Christ, culminates in man’s acquittal.

The reign of death, then, is replaced by the reign of the saints. In contrast to the reign of death, this is a reign “in life” (v. 17), “justification of life” (v. 18, clearly an appositional genitive), even “eternal life” (v. 21).

In what sense did Adam’s sin make all men sinners? By the transmission of death as the human inheritance. “Sin reigns in death” (v. 21). In the Bible, death apart from Christ is man’s final and definitive separa-

tion from God, which is the essence of sin. Men are conceived and born as sinners because death reigns in their very being. Death is the essence of Adam's legacy to the human race. It is from the reign of death that Christ came to set us free.

January 6. The Epiphany to the Magi

Today's feast is the last of the twelve days of Christmas. *Theophany*, the Greek name of this traditional feast, by which it is called in the Eastern Church, means "manifestation of God." *Epiphany*, the Greek name by which it is called among Western Christians, means simply "manifestation."

The fact that it has a Greek name even in the West indicates that the feast is Eastern in origin. Now incorporated into the Christmas season, this feast is certainly earlier than Christmas. Dating back to the second century, it was originally a feast celebrating the baptism of Jesus, at which, not only is he revealed as God's Son, but the Father and the Holy Spirit are revealed as well.

Among Christians of the Orthodox East, this is still the emphasis of the feast. It was not adopted by the West until the fourth century, and then as part of the Christmas festival. The themes of this feast are three events of Jesus' life: the adoration of the Magi ("We Three Kings of Orient Are"), the baptism of Jesus, and the miracle at Cana of Galilee, which was "the first of Jesus' signs" and caused his disciples to believe in him.

The lectionary tradition of the West has consistently included all three events. For example, among the Anglicans, Archbishop Cranmer was careful to put all three readings into the *Book of Common Prayer* for this day. In the lectionary arrangement of this *Devotional Guide* this year, special effort has been taken to read the three stories in sequence over these three days.

January 7. The Epiphany at the Baptism

In Mathew's account, the scene of the Lord's baptism is the explicit revelation of God as Holy Trinity: The voice of the Father testifies to his Son, and the Holy Spirit, appearing in the form of a dove, confirms the truth of that witness. Jesus' baptism by John was understood among the early Christians as being the inauguration of his ministry in this world (cf. Acts 1:22; 10:37f; 13:23-25), which closes, in Matthew's account, with the great mandate to baptize all nations in the name of the Holy Trinity (28:19).

January 8. The Epiphany at the Wedding

We come now to Cana, the third Galilean town mentioned in John (cf. 1:44–45) and the place where Jesus did “the first of his signs.” In this way “he manifested his glory, and his disciples came to believe in him.” That is to say, Cana is the place where the Church was first formed, that initial body of believers to whom the Lord revealed his glory.

In this story of Cana, John introduces the Mother of Jesus. She appears only here and at the foot of the cross (19:26–27). Thus, John places Mary at both the beginning and the end of Jesus’ public ministry. These two portrayals, both found only in John among the evangelists, have several things in common:

First, Mary does not appear in John’s Gospel outside of these two places. She frames the Lord’s public ministry.

Second, in both places she is called only “the mother of Jesus” and is never named. Uniting John’s portrayal of Mary at the wedding at Cana (the beginning of Jesus’ earthly ministry) and at the foot of the cross (the end) is what we might call “the theme of the royal mother.” John stresses Mary’s maternal relationship to Jesus; his use of the term “mother of Jesus” seems to convey a certain reverence, much as it does in Luke’s portrayal of the nascent Church gathered in the upper room, waiting for the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Third, in each instance Jesus addresses his mother as “Woman” (*gyne*). This, too, unites the two stories. Though this bare expression strikes the modern ear as impolite, perhaps even harsh, it was in fact a formal and decorous way for women to be addressed in biblical times (see, for example, Matthew 15:28 [Canaanite woman]; Luke 13:12 [crippled woman in the synagogue]; John 4:21 [Samaritan woman]; 8:10 [woman taken in adultery]; 20:13 [Mary Magdalene]). When it is used as a form of address, its closest English equivalent is “ma’am.”

Fourth, in both cases a “new family” is formed—in the first scene by the wedding itself, and in the second scene by a kind of adoption in which the beloved disciple “took her to his own home.”

John’s “mother of Jesus” thus plays an important part near the beginning of his account of the Lord’s ministry, in “the first of his signs,” where in he “manifested his glory” at Cana (John 2:11). In the dialogue leading up to this manifestation, Jesus seems at first to bridle at his mother’s hint that he should relieve the shortage of wine at the wedding feast. He explains to her, “My *hour* has not yet come” (2:4).

These words closely tie this scene at Cana to the scene at the cross later on. When the “hour” of the passion does finally come, it will once again be in reference to the manifestation of Jesus’ *glory*: “Father, the *hour* has

come. *Glorify* your Son, that your Son may also glorify you” (John 17:1).

John uses similar language of Jesus’ mother, telling us that it was “from that *hour* the disciple took her to his own home” (19:27). When the hour arrives for the King to be identified upon the throne of the cross (19:19), John is the only one of the evangelists to speak of the King’s mother standing beside it (19:26; cf. Psalms 45[44]:9).

January 14. The Priesthood of Melchizedek

The Old Testament provides a genealogy, at least in brief, for most of its “persons of the drama.” The clear exception is Melchizedek, who suddenly enters the biblical story in Genesis 14 and just as abruptly leaves it. Nothing whatever is said of his ancestry, the rest of his life, or his death. Melchizedek simply appears “without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life” (Hebrews 7:3). In fact, Genesis 14 tells us only five things about him:

First, Melchizedek was a king. “Salem,” the city of his kingship, was an old name for Jerusalem (Psalms 76[75]:2). Indeed, the Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, took Melchizedek to be the founder (*ho protos ktisas*) of the holy city (*The Jewish War* 6.438).

Second, Melchizedek was “the priest of God Most High.” In fact, he is the first man to whom Holy Scripture gives the title “priest” (*kohen*), and it is Melchizedek’s priesthood that receives the greater attention in the Bible. For example, while the Book of Psalms speaks of the Messiah’s kingship as derived from David (Psalms 78[77]:70; 89[88]:3–4,20,39,44; 110[109]:1–3), the Messiah’s priesthood is said to be “according to the order of Melchizedek” (110[109]:4).

Melchizedek was “the first to serve as priest to God” (*ierasato to Theo protos*), Josephus wrote, and long before Solomon built a temple at Jerusalem, Melchizedek had already done so (*to hieron protos deimamemos*). Indeed, Josephus traces the very name of Jerusalem (in Greek Hierosolyma) to the “priest of Salem” (*hierus Salem*) (*The Jewish War* 6.438).

Following the lead of Psalm 110 (109), the author of Hebrews sees in the priesthood of Melchizedek the “order” (*taxsis*) of the definitive priesthood of Christ the Lord (5:6,10; 6:20; 7:17). The Bible’s very silence with respect to the death of that ancient priest of Salem is taken as a prefiguration of the “unchangeable priesthood” (7:24) of God’s Son, to whom Melchizedek was “made like” (7:3). The latter was a living prophecy of the definitive Priest, who “has become a surety of a better covenant” (7:22).

Third, Abraham gave a tithe to Melchizedek, just as Abraham’s children gave tithes to the Levitical priests (7:8–10). That detail argues for

the superiority of the “order of Melchizedek” over the “order of Aaron” (7:11).

Fourth, Melchizedek blessed Abraham, saying: “Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand” (Genesis 14:19–20). This priestly blessing, too, indicates the superiority of the “order of Melchizedek,” inasmuch as “the lesser is blessed by the better” (Hebrews 7:7).

Fifth, Melchizedek “brought out bread and wine” (Genesis 14:18). His offering of bread and wine, moreover, was recognized as a priestly act; that is to say, Melchizedek did this precisely “because he was” a priest (as is clear in the Septuagint’s *en de* and the Vulgate’s *erat enim*).

Melchizedek’s offering of bread and wine, of course, was a type and prefiguration of what transpired that night when God’s priestly Son took the loaf of bread and the cup of wine into his holy and venerable hands and identified them as his Body and Blood. This is how the Christian Church has always interpreted the act of that first priest, Melchizedek, “who gave the wine and bread, the sanctified food, as a type of the Eucharist [*eis typon Eucharistias*]” (Clement of Alexandria, *Stromateis* 4.25). Melchizedek was the “type of Christ, and he offered the same gifts that prefigured the Mystery” (John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis* 36.8). “Who had the bread and wine?” asked Ambrose of Milan. “Not Abraham,” he answered, “but Melchizedek. Therefore he is the author of the Sacraments” (*De Sacramentis* 4.10). The living memory of Melchizedek thus abides deeply in the worship of the Christian Church.

January 24. Isaac’s Bride

The doctrine of divine providence is asserted in the biblical thesis that “all things work together for good to those who love God” (Romans 8:28). This “working together” of historical events under divine governance for particular and interrelated purposes is a mystery, of course, but a mystery in two senses.

First, divine providence is a mystery in the sense that it is humanly inscrutable, exceeding even the furthest reaches of our thought, and is known only by faith. That is to say, it pertains to divine revelation. It is not the general, natural *pronoia* of the Stoics and Middle Platonists, but a special providence revealed by God’s particular interventions in the structure of history. For this reason Holy Scripture never attempts to explain it. Although the Bible affirms divine providence, it teaches no theory of the matter.

Second, divine providence is also a mystery in the sense that we are initiated into it. It is rendered accessible, that is, to our revelatory experi-

ence of it, the discernment of which is a gift of the Holy Spirit. It is particular and personal, sensed through the coherent structure of events. For this reason Holy Scripture not only affirms divine providence, but also portrays the mystery of it through narratives about events.

The story of Joseph, which we shall study presently, is perhaps the most elaborate example of such a narrative. We do not discern how, in the Joseph story, “all things work together for good to those who love God,” but the narrative enables us to perceive it intuitively, buried deep in the events of Joseph’s life and conferring coherence on that life. At the end of the story we are able to say, with Joseph, “So now, it was not you who sent me here, but God” (Genesis 45:8).

In some cases, we can sense God’s providential purpose in a biblical story by the insinuated dynamics of the story itself, without our attention being drawn to it by any explicit statement. Examples of this are found in the Book of Ruth and, with far greater subtlety, the Book of Esther. In the latter story, in fact, God’s intrusive activity in the events is so subtle that he is not even mentioned!

In other instances the Bible conveys the providential nature of a story by the direct insertion of it through the voice of the narrator. Through such an insertion, the story takes on an entirely different flavor, being transfigured, so to speak, from secular to sacred. For instance, the tale of David’s escape from Saul at Hachilah (1 Samuel 26) is transformed into an account of divine providence by the plain statement that “all were sleeping, because a deep sleep from the Lord fell upon them” (26:12). Similarly the biblical narrator says, in the context of Absalom’s revolt, that “the Lord had purposed to defeat the good advice of Ahithophel, to the intent that the Lord might bring disaster on Absalom” (2 Samuel 17:14, NKJV).

Another literary method of conveying God’s providential purpose in a biblical story is to place the affirmation of it in the mouth of one of the characters. As I have mentioned, this is the method followed in the Joseph story, in the scene where he reveals himself to his brothers (Genesis 45:5–7; 50:15–20).

This style also characterizes the present story of the wooing of Rebekah. In this exquisitely crafted account of God’s historical intervention in response to prayer, two features should especially be noted.

First, the story is told twice, initially by the narrator (Genesis 24:1–26) and then a second time by a character within the narrative, namely the servant (vv. 34–48). This deliberate doubling of the story, which obliges the reader to think about its implications a second time, also serves the purpose of placing the theme of divine providence more completely within the fabric of the tale. In the first telling, the reader is struck by how quickly the servant’s prayer is heard—“it happened, before he finished

speaking” (v. 15). This promptness of God’s response is emphasized in the second telling—“before I finished speaking in my mind” (v. 45). God is encountered in the servant’s experience of the event that comes crashing in, as it were, on his prayer.

Second, the doubling of the narrative is not artificial. It is essential, rather, to the motive of Rebekah and her family in their decision that she should accompany the servant back to Abraham’s home and become the wife of Isaac. That is to say, the characters themselves are made aware that God has spoken through the narrated events. They perceive God’s providence: “The command [*dabar*] comes from the Lord; we cannot speak [*dabber*] to you either good or bad. Here is Rebekah before you; take her and go, and let her be your lord’s son’s wife, as the Lord has spoken [*dibber*]” (vv. 50–51). The event itself was a “word” from God, a *dabar*. That is to say, given the servant’s testimony, it was clear that all things had worked together “for good to those who love God.”

January 28. Understanding Psalm 95

This poem has for many centuries been used as one of the first psalms with which to begin the Christian day. It commences, after all, with an invitation to the praise of God: “Oh come, let us exult in the Lord, let us shout with joy to God, our salvation. Let us come with confession before his face, and shout to him in joy with psalms. . . . Come, let us adore and fall down and weep before the Lord who made us.”

All of these sentiments will mark our prayer during the course of the Christian day: joy and exultation, exclamation and resounding praise, humble adoration, weeping before the Lord, sometimes in sorrow for our sins, sometimes in the joy of his redeeming grace.

Because we belong to God in two ways, the psalm gives a double reason for our worship: creation and election.

First, creation: the whole of created order belongs to God—“for in his hand are all the ends of the earth, and the heights of the mountains are his; for the sea belongs to him, and he made it, and to the dry land his hands gave form.” Our worship is rooted in God’s sustained act of creation, by which we, and all things, have our being. (Being, and not just naked existence. We are not existentialists. We do not believe ourselves supplied merely with a generic, undetermined existence, but endowed, rather, with a specific, identified, and summoned “being” that forms the foundation and context of our destiny.) God is the resident Landlord of all the earth. Wherever we go upon the earth this day—whether the mountains, the sea, or the dry land—it all belongs to the God in whom we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28).

Second, our special divine election: we Christians belong to God in a most particular way, for he has called and chosen us in Christ: “for he is the Lord our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.” Our worship is thus rooted in our identity as the Chosen People of God: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” (Ephesians 1:3–4). Our worship rests in who we are by reason of our election.

This is all a very consoling doctrine, of course, but our psalm also sees in it a component of danger—namely, the frightful possibility of failure in this matter of our “being in Christ,” should memory fade and heart be hardened. Since God has chosen us, we are summoned to choose God, and because our future turns largely on the freedom of our choice, it is by no means inevitable that we will, in the end, be faithful to the invitation of our destiny. Thus, there is an explicit and real warning in this psalm, a warning born of bitter historical memory: “Today, if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts as at the offense on the day of temptation in the desert, where your fathers tempted me and put me to the test and beheld my works. Forty years I was offended with that generation and said: ‘They always wander in their hearts, and they have not known my ways,’ so I swore in my wrath: ‘They shall not enter into my rest.’”

Although the specific instance of infidelity here being recalled was the people’s unbelief at the rock of Kadesh (Numbers 20), God’s complaint is more general and takes in the entire forty years during which his unfaithful people wandered in the desert. Almost none of that generation entered into the Promised Land. Our psalm stands as a warning that all of us are capable of a like infidelity and hardness of heart. What happened in the desert to Israel of old can also happen “today.” The day of decision is always “today.”

This is likewise the point of the earliest Christian interpretation of this psalm, found in chapters 3 and 4 of Hebrews, a work addressed to a Christian congregation which, the author feared, was in serious danger of falling away from the faith. After quoting the above lines of our psalm, the author goes on to comment: “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. . . . Therefore, since a promise remains of entering his rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them” (3:12–13; 4:1–2).

Just like the Israelites who left Egypt and then died in the desert, it is

possible to fail in the profession of the Christian faith. Ultimate defection is, therefore, a matter of grave concern. How concerned should Christians be on this point? Our author answers, “everyday!” He says, “but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our conviction steadfast to the end.”

Hebrews is not the only place where the New Testament examines that period of Israel’s history in order to learn a warning. St. Paul does exactly the same thing: “I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased, for they were scattered in the wilderness. . . . Now these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition” (1 Corinthians 10:1–5,11).

It is important to learn the life in Christ, not only from the good examples, but also from the bad. Why is the story of Judas Iscariot referred to six times in the New Testament, except as a warning to Christians who may become complacent and forsake the fear of the Lord? If the Word of God is truly a lamp unto our feet, it will surely illumine for us the pitfalls along the path. In this way, it is possible to learn as much from the impatience of Saul as from the patience of Job. The study of Ahaz can be, in its own way, as profitable as the study of Isaiah.

February 1. The Wrestling Match

After taking leave of Laban, Jacob must think about how to approach Esau, for Esau represents the tricky aspect of Jacob’s homecoming (Genesis 32:4–7). Esau, meanwhile, has moved south to the land of Edom, a dry and inhospitable land that lucidly explains the words of God, “Esau I have hated, and I have appointed his borders for destruction and made his heritage as dwellings of the wilderness” (Malachi 1:3).

If Jacob is feeling threatened by Laban, he now feels even worse from the information that his older twin is coming to meet him with four hundred armed men. That last part is hardly the sort of detail calculated to allay anxiety. Indeed, a certain sense of anxiety may be exactly what Esau wants to inspire in Jacob. If so, the maneuver is successful.

Jacob does two things (Genesis 32:7–12). First, he prepares for the worst, taking certain practical steps with a view to at least a partial survival of his family. Second, he takes to prayer, certainly the most humble prayer he has made so far.

Ultimately, after all, this is a story of Jacob's relationship to God. Up to this point, God is still Isaac's God, the "God of my fathers" (v. 9). Jacob has not yet done what he promised at Bethel—take God as his own (28:21). God had also made certain promises to Jacob at Bethel, and Jacob now invokes those promises.

He continues his preparations for meeting the brother he has not seen in twenty years (32:13–23). He sends delegations with gifts, which are intended to impress Esau. Jacob, after all, knows that Esau has four hundred men, but Esau does not know how many Jacob may have. Jacob's gifts, including five hundred and eighty animals, verge on the flamboyant.

Jacob approaches the ford of Jabbok, at a place called Peniel, or "face of God" (v. 30). The Hebrew text of verses 17–31 uses the word "face" (*paneh*) no fewer than six times. Jacob knows that Esau will soon be "in his face." He must "face" Esau, which is why he is going directly toward him. Up to this point, Jacob has been a man of flight, flight from Canaan, flight from Haran, flight from Esau, flight from Laban. This all must change. Jacob cannot face his future until he has faced his past.

Even before he can face Esau, however, Jacob must face Someone Else (vv. 23–32). This encounter with God, which, apparently, Jacob has not anticipated, is far more significant than his encounter with Esau. A millennium later the prophet Hosea would meditate on this scene. This wrestling match is Jacob's decisive encounter with God.

Everything changes. First, his name is changed to Israel (v. 28), as Abram's was changed to Abraham in a parallel encounter with God (17:3–5,15). Second, God is no longer simply "the God of my fathers." He is now "the God of Israel" (33:20). Third, Jacob will limp from this experience for the rest of his life (32:25,31–32). No one wrestles with the living God and afterwards looks normal and well-adjusted. There is a further irony here. Jacob began life by tripping his brother as the latter exited the womb. Now Jacob himself will be permanently tripped up by a limp.

February 2. The Presentation in the Temple

This is the Feast of our Lord's Presentation in the Temple, because we have reached the fortieth day after Christmas, and, according to the Mosaic Law, a male child had to be presented to the Lord forty days after his birth. In observing this prescription, Jesus fulfilled the purpose of the Law. His presentation in the Temple is recorded only in Luke, who manifests a singular regard for the imagery of the Temple (indeed, his Gospel both begins and ends with worship in the Temple—1:9; 24:53), and the event symbolizes Christ's dedication of himself to be the true sacrificial

offering, toward which all the sacrifices in the Temple had been offered for centuries.

February 5. The Family of Esau

Before closing the door on Esau, who was rejected from a direct and active role in salvation history (Malachi 1:2–3; Romans 9:13), the Bible provides its readers with a list of the tribes derived from the seed of Jacob's older brother, the peoples of Edom. This list forms a sort of literary break between the Jacob and Joseph cycles.

Were it not for the Bible, and this list in particular, the Edomites would have disappeared from recorded history just as surely as their patriarch disappeared from salvation history. The substance of this list was later incorporated into the work of the Chronicler (1 Chronicles 1:35–54).

This compilation appears to be made up of six separate lists: (1) the immediate sons of Esau and his settling at Seir (Genesis 36:1–8); (2) Esau's grandsons (vv. 9–14); (3) the early chieftains of Edom (vv. 15–19); (4) the first inhabitants of Seir (vv. 20–30); (5) the kings of Edom (vv. 31–39); and (6) the governors of Edom after their monarchy (vv. 40–43). The reader observes that these lists correspond to the developing stages of Edom's political history. That is to say, the biblical historians kept a steady eye on the Edomites over a fairly long history. (Much of this material obviously comes from periods long after Moses.)

In the first list (vv. 1–8) it is easy to discern small discrepancies with the narratives about Esau (26:34; 28:9). These are probably to be explained by discrepancies within the extra-biblical sources used in their compilation. Nor do all the biblical sources themselves agree on the names of Esau's wives. For example, in the Samaritan text Mahalet is substituted for Basemath in verses 3, 4, 10, 13, and 17.

There is no substantial reason to suppose that Esau had more than three wives. Some names in the second list (vv. 9–14) appear elsewhere in Holy Scripture. Reuel (v. 13), for instance, was the father-in-law of Moses (Exodus 2:18; Numbers 10:29), and Eliphaz (v. 12) may be one of the comforters of Job.

The tribal leaders in the third list (vv. 15–19) perhaps correspond to the period of the biblical "judges," on the reasonable hypothesis that Edom's political history rather closely matched that of Israel.

The fourth list (vv. 20–30), on the other hand, contains information about the pre-Edomite inhabitants of Seir, the Horites. They are listed here only to fill out the genealogical picture of the region. Thus, the mention of Uz (v. 28) likely refers to the founder of the city called by that name, the hometown of Job.

The fifth list (vv. 31–39), which chronologically follows the third, contains the names of Edom’s kings and presumably corresponds, in rough fashion, to Israel’s monarchical period (1000–587 B.C.). The short sixth list of Edom’s governors (vv. 40–43) apparently comes from the Persian period when the Edomites, like Israel, no longer had kings.

Notwithstanding the obvious sympathy toward Edomites demonstrated in the preservation of these lists, Israel’s relationships with this people were anything but harmonious. Although the prophet Obadiah is perhaps our clearest example of an entirely negative sentiment toward Edom, he was scarcely alone in this respect. There is evidence that more than one Israelite found his style cramped by Deuteronomy’s injunction not to despise the Edomite (Deuteronomy 23:7). Those descendants of Esau, after all, had obstructed the chosen people’s way to the Promised Land in the days of Moses (Numbers 20:21), and according to the prophet Amos, in the eighth century the Edomites, having “cast off all pity” (Amos 1:11, NKJV), were involved in the international slave trade (1:6,9).

Edom’s most memorable offenses, however, occurred when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem in 587 B.C. At that time they rejoiced at the city’s downfall (Lamentations 4:21), exploiting its misfortune in a vengeful way (Ezekiel 25:12). Most serious of all was the vile complicity of the Edomites in the demolition of Solomon’s temple, an outrage for which they are explicitly blamed in 1 Esdras 4:45. This final offense likewise inspired a line of Psalm 137 (136), a lament composed in captivity “by the rivers of Babylon” (v. 1) where the exiles sat and wept, remembering Zion. Reflecting on the holy city’s recent, ruthless destruction, the psalmist bitterly recalled Edom’s share in the matter: “O Lord, remember the sons of Edom / On that day in Jerusalem, / When they were saying, ‘Empty it out, / Empty it out, / Even to its foundation!’” (v. 7). Obadiah’s postexilic prophecy testifies that his own rancor toward the Edomites was prompted by the identical recollection. He particularly blames them for rejoicing at Jerusalem’s downfall, despoiling the city, blocking the path of escape against those who fled, and handing the refugees over to their captors (Obadiah 12–14). He can scarcely forget that the descendants of Esau were, in fact, blood relatives of the Israelites. Like Amos, who had earlier accused Edom of pursuing “his brother with a sword” (Amos 1:11), Obadiah speaks of “slaughter and ungodliness against your brother Jacob” (Obadiah 10).

The prophetic doom pronounced by the Bible against the Edomites was vindicated in their displacement by the Nabateans in the fourth century B.C. Forced to migrate to southern Palestine, they were eventually subjugated by John Hyrcanus (134–104 B.C.). From that point on, they were simply assimilated into Judaism. One of them, named Herod, even

became a king of the Jews, but he always sensed that someday a real descendant of David might appear on the scene and challenge his claim to the throne. It made him very nervous and unreasonable.

February 13. Judah & His Father

The personality of the patriarch Judah is chiefly elaborated in the story of Joseph, where Judah is part of a rather complex narrative.

Thus, in the encounter between Joseph and Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39), the example of Joseph's chastity is heightened by a contrast with two of his older brothers, the incestuous Reuben in Chapter 35 (cf. 49:4) and the lustful Judah in Chapter 38. This contrast, moreover, is quietly introduced by the specific attention directed to both of these brothers (37:21f, 26f, 29) in the context of Joseph's being sold to Potiphar (37:36). Later on, of course, both Reuben and Judah will be important to the developing tension of the Joseph story (42:22–24,37; 43:3,8).

The tale of Judah and his daughter-in-law in Genesis 38 is particularly relevant here, for it deliberately interrupts the account of Joseph's trials near their very beginning. Nor is this break in the story a distraction from the theme. Inserted between Joseph's arrival at Potiphar's house and the incident of Potiphar's wife, this tale of Judah manifestly serves three purposes:

First, it provides a literary "meanwhile," hinting at the passage of time in Joseph's life. This "Judah interlude" allows the reader to put Joseph out of his mind for a while, so that he can "get settled," as it were, down in Egypt. Only then will attention be drawn back to Joseph.

Second, as already noted, the incident of Judah's lust offers an immediate contextual contrast to Joseph's chastity.

Third, this position of Judah near the beginning of the drama of Joseph prepares the reader for Judah's essential role in its resolution (44:18–34). Thus, when Jacob's sons finally arrive at Joseph's home for the story's memorable denouement, it is significant that they are called "Judah and his brothers" (44:14). Even as the story of Joseph comes to an end, we learn that "Judah is a lion's whelp" and that "the scepter shall not depart from Judah" (49:9–10). Indeed, in this final section of Genesis, properly known as the Joseph Cycle, one easily detects another motif that can be called "the conversion of Judah."

Born fourth among the twelve brothers, Judah rises to prominence after the moral failings of the older three (49:3–7). It is in the Joseph story that he is brought specifically to the reader's notice, when he proposes that the younger brother be sold instead of killed. There is a moral emphasis here. Whatever his other moral failings, Judah is at least sensitive

to the sin of fratricide: “Let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh” (37:27).

There immediately follows the extended interlude that recounts the mutual deception of Judah and Tamar. Bereaved of a wife and two sons within six verses (38:7–12), the wily Judah deceives his daughter-in-law by withholding his youngest son from his levirate responsibilities (38:11). He is in turn deceived by Tamar’s impersonation of a harlot (38:12–23). Once again there is a moral note in the story. Judah, at first indignant about Tamar’s alleged adultery (38:24–25), is smitten in conscience when the truth is revealed (38:25–26). Tamar has turned the tables on her father-in-law; he can only acknowledge his paternity of the children whom she carries in her womb. This narrative, in addition to its importance in the genealogy of the chosen people, is a chief component in the moral development of Judah.

Judah’s finest hour arrives with his lengthy pleading for the delivery of Benjamin (44:16–34), which leads directly to Joseph’s revelation to his brothers (45:1–15). It is essential for Joseph to know that his brothers have really changed over the years. Will these men simply go back to their father with heartbreaking news about Benjamin, as they did in his own case so many years before? Or will they come clean about their offense? Are they yet the coldhearted men of yesteryear? Joseph has to know.

It is at this point that “Judah came near to him and said” (44:18), and, in answering these moral questions, he assumes his destined leadership among the sons of Jacob. To the yet unrecognized Joseph he pleads with tears that their aged father be spared any further distress, and the supple, forgiving soul of Joseph needs to hear no more. Judah has repented with all his heart.

February 14. The Revelation of Joseph

The long-lost brother, step by step, puts to the test the spiritual state of his siblings. He has now utterly reduced them, forcing them to face their guilt and to assume responsibility for their plight. They are completely hopeless and limp before him. At the same time, Joseph has been obliged to place very tight, unnatural restraints on his own emotions, and now the latter have mounted to flood stage behind the restraining wall of his will. The time has come, then, to bring everything out into the open. No further good will be served by further delay. Joseph speaks (Genesis 45:1–3).

The brothers are not able to come to grips with the situation. This powerful stranger has suddenly started speaking to them in their own language. The veil is removed. If the brothers were vulnerable and de-

spairing in the previous chapter, now things have become infinitely worse. They are now faced with a reality that they had not even slightly suspected. Joseph must repeat who he is (v. 4), and for the first time he mentions a little incident that happened in Dothan many years before. This reference can hardly provide comfort for the bewildered brothers, and Joseph must attempt to lessen their stark terror and anxiety (v. 5), for God's providence works even in sin (Philemon 15). God commands us always to meet evil with good, and God himself models that commandment. Anyone can bring good from good. Divine activity is chiefly manifest in bringing good out of evil. Joseph must repeat the lesson to be learned (Genesis 45:5–8).

Joseph alternates between practical concerns (vv. 9–13, 21–24) and more emotion stirred by the moment (vv. 14–15). If the brothers actually said anything at this point, it was probably incoherent. They become extremely passive and obedient. As long as they are in Egypt, Genesis 45 will record not a single word from them. The entire impression from this chapter will be bewilderment to the point of stupefaction.

Joseph's single question to them has to do simply with his father. Like Judah in the previous chapter, Joseph's concern is with his father. This is entirely proper, because Jacob, on learning what had transpired, is overwhelmed with emotion (vv. 25–28). Some news is just too good to believe (cf. Luke 24:37–38; Mark 16:9–13).

February 20. The Prophecy of Nahum

In one respect, at least, Nahum is unique in all the Bible—what he announced was exactly what his contemporaries most *wanted* to hear!

Most biblical prophets are, after all, “countervailing.” That is to say, most of the time we find them resisting, even denouncing, the popular mind of their day. They usually speak in a direction about 180 degrees at variance with the temper of their times.

Thus, if God's people are content and self-satisfied, the biblical prophets step in and give them something to worry about. If, on the other hand, God's people are depressed and weary, the prophets' word to them is normally encouraging and full of promise. In short, the word of the prophet is most often just the opposite of what the people are disposed to hear, a feature that tends to render the prophet a tad unpopular in his own time. It is easy to show that this countervailing disposition rules in most of the Bible's prophetic books.

Not in the Book of Nahum, however. His was a word that all expected and no Israelites were sad to hear! Shortly before the fall of the Assyrian capital, Nineveh, in 612, Nahum announced its coming destruction in

the most vivid terms, to the universal jubilation of his listeners. Assyria was the scourge of its time. Ever since its rise a few centuries earlier, the empire ruled from Nineveh had inflicted countless sufferings across the Fertile Crescent. As prophesied by Amos, the Assyrians under Emperor Sargon II had conquered the Kingdom of Israel in 722, carrying away the ten northern tribes to a bitter captivity, and other nations of the Middle East suffered an identical fate.

Moreover, the Assyrians destroyed the Phoenician capital of Tyre and conquered the Nile Delta. Meanwhile, the nations of Judah, Syria, Ammon, Moab, and Edom were held under Assyrian subjection and tribute. Only a miraculous intervention had preserved Jerusalem itself from destruction by the Emperor Sennacherib. It is not surprising that the Assyrians were thoroughly and roundly hated throughout the lands of the Bible. We recall with what reluctance the Prophet Jonah had preached repentance to the Ninevites back in the eighth century, for he did not want them to repent!

By the beginning of the seventh century, nonetheless, a new empire was rising to challenge Assyria—namely, a rejuvenated Babylon. Perhaps the latter power seemed harmless at first. We recall that King Hezekiah of Judah, late in his reign, received a Babylonian delegation, foolishly showing them the treasures of his kingdom, never suspecting that these Babylonians would soon return to claim that treasure. Isaiah, however, a keen interpreter of his times, foresaw it all.

Neither in the Bible nor in other ancient records is it clear exactly how the Assyrian Empire arrived at the decline that marked its existence by the mid-seventh century, though one suspects that it had simply grown too large to be manageable. More than one empire in history has been taught the danger of having too many borders to defend. In 614, when combined forces of Babylonians and Medes destroyed Assyria's older capital, the city of Ashur, the Prophet Nahum sensed that the end of its newer capital, Nineveh, was not far off. The three chapters of his prophecies should be dated between 614 and 612.

Nineveh, the Assyrian capital, was a most impressive city for that time. Its containing wall was 8 miles long and embraced about 1,850 acres, or 2.89 square miles. It was full of palaces built by Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, and Ashurbanipal. Its temples to Ishtar and Nabu were world famous. It was full of wealth drawn from the whole region between Egypt and the Persian Gulf.

Most Assyrians may have thought that the empire and its capital would last forever. Not so, said Nahum, going on to describe Nineveh's impending destruction in very colorful scenes that depict the scarlet tunics of the invading armies, the rumbling of horses' hooves and chariot

wheels, the brandishing of spears, the flaming torches put to the buildings. In short, “Woe to the bloody city!” (Nahum 3:1).

Such a fate, says Nahum, must hang over every nation that rebels against the rule of God, for “who can stand before his indignation? And who can endure the fierceness of his anger?” (1:6).

February 23. The Book of Proverbs

We begin reading the Book of Proverbs today, and it will be our Old Testament chapter through much of Lent. This attention to the moral teaching of Proverbs during Lent is inspired by the traditional lectionary of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

Although the entire book is ascribed to Solomon (1:1), this ascription should not be understood in a sense that precludes other sources. These latter are of two sorts. First, the more ancient wisdom of Egypt and the Fertile Crescent. These older sapiential traditions both formed the general ambience of Solomon’s work and contributed some of the specific contents of that work. Second, later increments to the Solomonic heritage contributed during the long period of Israel’s scribal transmission of the Sacred Text.

Indeed, only two sections of this book (10:1—22:16 and 25:1—29:7) are directly attributed to Solomon, and even the second of these was received through the eighth-century scribes who worked for King Hezekiah.

Developed in many contexts and over several centuries, the wisdom tradition contained in the Bible is varied and rich. In what is probably its earliest stage, Israel’s interest in the pursuit of wisdom is seen in those old accounts of the practical shrewdness of their ancestors. One recalls, for example, the cleverness of the Hebrew midwives at the beginning of Exodus, those ladies who outwitted the evil designs of Pharaoh. There was also young David, of course, who consistently tricked the king of Philistia in the closing chapters of 1 Samuel. Most of all, perhaps, one thinks of Jacob and how he outsmarted even the wily Laban. In these, as in many other instances over the centuries, it was sharp, artful thinking that guaranteed the family’s survival, and it is clear that the storytellers of the Bible loved to describe how their forebears could out-think their opponents.

As Israel became a real political entity after the Exodus, there emerged the need to incorporate that ancient familial trait into public policies. Indeed, the need was pressing. Almost immediately after entering the Holy Land, Israel had been duped into an unwise treaty by a local group called the Gibeonites (Joshua 9), and the wiser Israelites began to ask themselves how a nation so easily deceived by the lackluster Gibeon-

ites would fare against the likes of Egypt and Syria. It was necessary, then, to advance intelligent men to positions of national leadership, especially after Israel's adoption of a monarchy near the end of the eleventh century.

As Israel endeavored to create a geopolitical place for itself near the western end of the Fertile Crescent, such men would be trained in the arts of diplomacy, finance, and international trade. Examples would include Elihoreph and Ahijah, who served in the court of Solomon (1 Kings 4:3).

Alongside this sophisticated cultivation of political prudence, Israel's search for wisdom was also preserved in the folk traditions of its non-governing citizens, especially the farmers, craftsmen, and local merchants. This latter form of wisdom is contained mainly in short, pithy sayings, easily memorized from childhood, maxims of the sort collected and preserved in the Book of Proverbs. The wisdom in this book is traditional, in the sense that the emphasis falls on such themes as fidelity to inherited standards, respect for the teachings of parents and elders, adherence to Israel's historical legacy, and so forth. The tone is immensely conservative, recommending what may be called the tried and true, the safe and sane. The Book of Proverbs habitually asks "How?", not "Why?" On the whole in this book, wisdom is mainly practical, not speculative (Proverbs 8 is an exception.). It has to do with sobriety of judgment, prudence in one's business affairs, personal discipline in the use of one's time, money, and other resources, strict marital fidelity, and the consequent joys of home, property, tradition, and family.

March 1. The Way to Destruction (Proverbs 7)

The Book of Proverbs' sustained warnings against sexual aberration, especially adultery, which directly attacks the institution of the family, argue that one of man's chief areas of stewardship is sex. Moreover, the book's several warnings about adulteresses should be viewed as integral to the image of wisdom as Lady Wisdom, which a wise man is said to take as a bride. And just as Lady Wisdom becomes personified in a man's own wife, Dame Folly is personified in the adulteress. The entire present chapter is devoted to this theme.

Mockery and sarcasm, rhetorical forms used in both the prophetic and sapiential literature of the Bible with some frequency, enjoy the advantage that comes of not taking someone or something as worthy of serious consideration. This chapter illustrates the advantage. The adventurous woman is held up to considerable ridicule, and so is the young fool who falls for her. Indeed, the young man is here provided with the very words and gestures that she will employ to seduce him. She commences with flattery (vv. 5,21); that is to say, she gives the young man "a posi-

tive self-image.” (A man who builds his self-confidence on a woman’s approval already demonstrates his immaturity. Prior to the present age it was taken as axiomatic that a young man should not even seek a woman’s approval—and had no right to expect it—until he had proven himself among men.)

We see the young man walking down the street, dripping with inexperience, a virtual lamb ambling toward the slaughter. The very fool, he is strolling aimlessly after dark (vv. 6–9; Sirach 9:7), unaware that, even if he is not looking for trouble, trouble is looking for him (vv. 10–12). The restless lady comes along and promises him a rollicking good time (vv. 13–18), mentioning that her husband will be out of town for a while (vv. 19–20). (One thinks of Mrs. Potiphar approaching Joseph in Genesis 39.) Thus is the young fellow suckered into sin (vv. 21–23). The chapter ends with the exhortation to be on guard, especially keeping custody of the heart (v. 25). What is to be eschewed is the path to death (v. 27), the other of the Two Ways.

March 2. The Glories of Wisdom (Proverbs 8)

In this chapter, personified Lady Wisdom herself speaks. Like the adulteress in the previous chapter, she, too, goes seeking the young man in the streets of the city (v. 2). She, too, appeals to the heart (v. 5). We observe, however, that she does not use flattery. The young man really needs her, and he has nothing to commend him without her.

In the biblical view, God has first loved us, not we God. Man can seek for wisdom only inasmuch as wisdom seeks for man. And it is all men that she seeks (v. 4), not merely the Jews.

Wisdom teaches truth, the opposite of which is not merely error, but wickedness (v. 7), and truth is identified with righteousness (v. 8). Wisdom is the highest good (vv. 10–11), the treasure buried in the field, for the sake of which a man will sell all that he has to purchase that field. Wisdom is the source of order and justice (vv. 12–16). Hence, it is exactly what is required for a man to bring his life into a just order. What a man must have in his heart is the “love of wisdom” (v. 17), an expression called *philosophia* in Greek. All other gifts come from wisdom (vv. 18–19).

Wisdom is the creating companion of God (vv. 22–29; Sirach 1:4,9; Colossians 1:15). As such, wisdom is older and more substantial than the physical world (Sirach 24:1–21; Wisdom of Solomon 7:22–28). Indeed, wisdom was the Creator’s architect (vv. 27–30).

Such is the wisdom concerned in the chapter’s final exhortation (vv. 32–36), which is best read as the *verso* of the exhortation that closed the previous chapter (7:24–27).

SUNDAY LECTIONARY—WINTER 2018-2019

DATE	LUTHERAN	ANGLICAN	ROMAN CATHOLIC
12/2	Jer. 33:14-16 1 Thes. 3:9-13 Luke 21:25-36	Zech. 14:4-9 1 Thes. 3:9-13 Luke 21:25-31	Jer. 33:14-16 1 Thes. 3:12-4:2 Luke 21:25-28,34-36
12/9	Mal. 3:1-4 Phil. 1:3-11 Luke 3:1-6	Bar. 5:1-9 Phil. 1:1-11 Luke 3:1-6	Bar. 5:1-9 Phil. 1:4-6,8-11 Luke 3:1-6
12/16	Zeph. 3:14-18a Phil. 4:4-9 Luke 3:7-18	Zeph. 3:14-20 Phil. 4:4-9 Luke 3:7-18	Zeph. 3:14-18 Phil. 4:4-7 Luke 3:10-18
12/23	Micah 5:2-4 Heb. 10:5-10 Luke 1:39-55	Micah 5:2-4 Heb. 10:5-10 Luke 1:39-56	Micah 5:1-4 Heb. 10:5-10 Luke 1:39-45
12/30	Jer. 31:10-13 Heb. 2:10-18 Luke 2:41-52	Is. 61:10-62:3 Gal. 3:23-25; 4:4-7 John 1:1-18	Sir. 3:2-6,12-14 Col. 3:12-21 Luke 2:41-52
1/6	Is. 60:1-6 Eph. 3:2-12 Matt. 2:1-12	Is. 60:1-6,9 Eph. 3:1-12 Matt. 2:1-12	Is. 60:1-6 Eph. 3:2-3,5-6 Matt. 2:1-12
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2/3	Jer. 1:4-10 1 Cor. 12:27-13:13 Luke 4:21-32	Jer. 1:4-10 1 Cor. 14:12b-20 Luke 4:21-32	Jer. 1:4-5,17-19 1 Cor. 12:31-13:13 Luke 4:21-30
2/10	Is. 6:1-13 1 Cor. 14:12b-20 Luke 5:1-11	Judg. 6:11-24a 1 Cor. 15:1-11 Luke 5:1-11	Is. 6:1-8 1 Cor. 15:1-11 Luke 5:1-11
2/17	Jer. 17:5-8 1 Cor. 15:12,16-20 Luke 6:17-26	Jer. 17:5-10 1 Cor. 15:12-20 Luke 6:17-26	Jer. 17:5-8 1 Cor. 15:12,16-20 Luke 6:17,20-26
2/24	Gen. 45:3-8a,15 1 Cor. 15:35-38a,42-50 Luke 6:27-38	Gen. 45:3-11,21-28 1 Cor. 15:35-38,42-50 Luke 6:27-38	1 Sam. 26:2,7-9,12-13, 22-23 1 Cor. 15:45-49 Luke 6:27-38

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STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

1. Publication Title: Daily Devotional Guide
 2. Publication Number: 0023-205
 3. Filing Date: October 1, 2018
 4. Issue Frequency: Quarterly
 5. Number of Issues Published Annually: 4
 6. Annual Subscription Price: \$19.95
 7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: 4125 West Newport Ave. Chicago, Cook, Illinois 60641-4009; Contact person: James Kushiner; Telephone: 773-481-1090
 8. Complete Mailing address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher: 4125 West Newport Ave., Chicago, IL 60641
 9. Full names and complete Mailing Address of Publisher: James M. Kushiner, 4125 West Newport Ave., Chicago, IL 60641; Editor: Patrick Henry Reardon, 4125 West Newport Ave. Chicago, IL 60641; Managing Editor, Contact: Anita Kuhn, 4125 West Newport Ave., Chicago, IL 60641
 10. Owner: Full Names: The Fellowship of St. James, Address: 4125 West Newport Ave. Chicago, IL 60641
 11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders: None
 12. Tax Status: The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes has not changed during preceding 12 months.
 13. Publication Title: St. James Daily Devotional Guide
 14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: Winter 2017 – Autumn 2018
 15. Extent and Nature of Circulation: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months / No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
 - a. Total Number of Copies: 1200 / 1200
 - b. 1. Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions: 1001 / 923
 - b. 2. Paid In-County Subscriptions: 0 / 0
 - b. 3. Sales through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales: 34 / 33
 - b. 4. Other Classes Mailed through the USPS: 0 / 0
 - c. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation: 1032 / 953
 - d. 1. Free Distribution by Mail Outside-County: 13 / 9
 - d. 2. Free Distribution by Mail In-County: 0 / 0
 - d. 3. Free Distribution by Mail, Other classes through the USPS: 0 / 0
 - d. 4. Free Distribution Outside Mail: 22 / 22
 - e. Total Free Distribution: 35 / 31
 - f. Total Distribution: 1067 / 984
 - g. Copies Not Distributed: 134 / 216
 - h. Total: 1200 / 1200
 - i. Percent Paid: 96.74% / 96.85%
 16. Electronic Copy Circulation: Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months / No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
 - a. Paid Electronic Copies: 213 / 203
 - b. Total Paid Print Copies + Paid Electronic Copies: 1245 / 1156
 - c. Total Print Distribution + Paid Electronic Copies: 1280 / 1187
 - d. Percent Paid: 97.28% / 97.39%
- I certify that 50% of all my distributed copies (electronic and print) are paid above a nominal price.
17. Publication Statement of Ownership: Will be printed in the Winter 2018-2019 issue of this publication
- I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. James M. Kushiner, Editor. Date: November 1, 2018



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For Christ, Creed & Culture