

The Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

Dominica vigesima post Pentecosten

Missale Romanum 1962 · Proper of Time · 11 October 2026

the word that heals from afar, the song of the exiles and the two peoples: three readings of the proper, compared

Element	Text and reference	What it says
Introit	<i>Omnia, quae fecisti nobis</i> ; Dan 3:31, 29 and 35, as printed; verse Ps 118:1 (Heb. 119)	Azarias's confession in the furnace: all that God has done "thou hast done by a just judgment: for we have sinned and disobeyed thy commandments"; then the plea for mercy (1861 English). The verse blesses "the undefiled in the way".
Collect	<i>Largire, quaesumus, Domine</i>	Pardon and peace, that the faithful, cleansed of every offence, "may serve thee with secure minds" (1861 English).
Epistle	Eph 5:15–21	Walk as wise, "redeeming the time, because the days are evil"; be filled with the Holy Spirit, singing in your hearts and giving thanks always for all things.
Gradual	<i>Oculi omnium</i> ; Ps 144:15–16 (Heb. 145)	"The eyes of all hope in thee, O Lord: and thou givest them meat in due season."
Alleluia	<i>Paratum cor meum</i> ; Ps 107:2 (Heb. 108)	"My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready"; the Missal's form names God the singer's glory.
Gospel	Jn 4:46–53	A ruler asks Jesus to come down to his dying son and is rebuked for a faith that waits on signs; "Go thy way. Thy son liveth"; he believes the word, goes, learns the hour, and believes with his whole house.
Offertory	<i>Super flumina Babylonis</i> ; Ps 136:1 (Heb. 137)	Captives weep by the rivers of Babylon, remembering Sion, addressed as "thee".
Secret	<i>Caelestem nobis praebeant</i>	That these mysteries "procure us a heavenly remedy, and cleanse away the vices of our hearts" (1861 English).
Communion	<i>Memento verbi tui</i> ; Ps 118:49–50 (Heb. 119)	God is asked to remember his word, "in which thou hast given me hope".
Postcommunion	<i>Ut sacris, Domine</i>	"That we may be worthy of thy sacred gifts . . . we may always obey thy commandments" (1861 English).

Second class, green, with Gloria, Credo and the Trinity Preface; no Tract and no Sequence. The Sunday is preferred to the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose three orations are commemorated in low and conventual Masses and omitted in a sung Mass that is not conventual (RG 16, 108, 111, 127 b; RGM 434, 437 a, 475 a, 494 b).

Sense	Synthesis
Literal	Azarias confesses in the furnace that God's judgments on his people were true and asks mercy. At Cana a ruler asks Jesus to come down to his dying son, is rebuked for a faith that waits on signs, believes the word "Thy son liveth", and learns that the fever left the boy at that hour. Captives weep by Babylon's rivers; St Paul bids the Ephesians redeem the time and sing in their hearts.
Allegorical	Christ, absent nowhere, heals by command what he created by his will (Gregory). Babylon is the world whose loves flow past, Sion the heavenly mother of the exiled faithful (Augustine; Hilary). Christ's own country figures the people of the Jews, who saw signs and scarcely believed, and the Samaritans the nations (Augustine); the ruler figures the Fathers praying for their people (Aquinas).
Moral	Believe the word before you see, and grow in faith on the road (Aquinas); do not wait for miracles (Chrysostom). Confess God's justice before asking his gifts (Jerome; Augustine); sit by Babylon's rivers, not in them (Augustine); sing with the heart (Jerome). Stand humbly as the grafted branch before the root, the patriarchs (Augustine).
Anagogical	The road between the word and its proof ends in sight: the blessed enjoy the truth that sustains us "without any veil, face to face" (Schuster); captivity passes, and we triumph with our King (Augustine); when the fullness of the Gentiles has come in, all Israel will be saved (Cyril, after Rom 11:25–26).

Scriptural Date and Location

Proper	Citation	Location	Date
Alleluia	Ps 107:2 (Heb. 108)	David, by the title; the psalm repeats the closes of Pss 56 and 59	Traditional attribution – disputed: David (reign in the usual chronology), B.C. 1055–1015. Historical setting – Occasion date unresolved. Composition: Before c. 165 B.C.
Titled <i>Canticum Psalmi ipsi David</i> , with no occasion. The reign is David's in the "usual chronology" of the <i>Catholic Encyclopedia's</i> "David" (vol. 4, 1908), which reports a later dating beside it, a reference point and not the psalm's date; the composition date is the <i>New American Bible, Revised Edition's</i> bound for the Psalter.			
Communion	Ps 118:49–50 (Heb. 119)	The psalmist, "a sojourner on the earth" (v. 19), in the strophe <i>Zain</i>	Traditional attribution – disputed: David (reign in the usual chronology), B.C. 1055–1015. Historical setting – Occasion date unresolved. Composition: Before c. 165 B.C.
Titled <i>Alleluia</i> ; the Davidic attribution is disputed, and the record holds no occasion. The Introit's verse, Ps 118:1, is dated below.			
Offertory	Ps 136:1 (Heb. 137)	The captives of Juda by the rivers of Babylon, after the fall of Jerusalem	Historical setting: The Babylonian captives' lament, after Jerusalem's destruction under Sedecias (derived). Historical setting: The seventy years of servitude to Babylon, "seventy years" (duration). Composition: Before c. 165 B.C. Historical background: The third captivity of Juda: the destruction of Jerusalem under Sedecias: Preferred: A.M. 3416 (Haydock reporting Ussher; A.M. is not converted); alternatives: B.C. 586 (Reid and Meistermann, <i>Catholic Encyclopedia</i>), B.C. 587 (Schets, <i>Catholic Encyclopedia</i>), B.C. 588 (Petavius table reported by Sloet; retained transcription checked, printed-page verification still pending). The represented event is after this historical event. These dates belong to that historical event, not to the passage or its composition. Both events could occur in the same year.
Titled <i>Psalmus David, Ieremiae</i> . The record gives a setting, not an author: "For the time of Jeremias, and the captivity of Babylon" (Haydock), and the seventy years of servitude (Jer 25:11–12), a duration. The background dates belong to Jerusalem's destruction under Sedecias, not to the psalm; the year from the creation of the world is Haydock's report of Ussher, unconverted.			
Gradual	Ps 144:15–16 (Heb. 145)	David, by the title; God's kingship and his care for every creature	Traditional attribution – disputed: David (reign in the usual chronology), B.C. 1055–1015. Historical setting – Occasion date unresolved. Composition: Before c. 165 B.C.
Titled <i>Laudatio ipsi David</i> , without an occasion; the reign is a reference point, the composition date the Psalter's bound.			
Introit	Dan 3:31, 29 and 35, as printed; the verse Ps 118:1 (Heb. 119)	The furnace in the province of Babylon, under Nabuchodonosor (Dan 3:1, 20)	Historical setting – No single occasion date applies across every cited locus. Composition – No single date applies across every cited locus.
<i>Narrated event: the three young men, cast into the furnace for refusing to adore the king's statue, walk in the flame and Azarias prays (Dan 3:1–25); the narrative gives no year.</i>			
Daniel and the verse are dated differently, so the cell holds no single date. The <i>Catholic Encyclopedia's</i> "Book of Daniel" (vol. 4, 1908) ascribes the Prayer of Azarias, without a year, to an unknown Jewish author, "most likely long after the Exile"; St Jerome reports that it is not in the Hebrew. For the verse, the record gives the Psalter's composition bound, Ps 118:1: before c. 165 B.C.; and, as the reference point of the disputed attribution to David, his reign in the usual chronology, Ps 118:1: 1055–1015 B.C.			
Gospel	Jn 4:46–53	Writing: St John the Apostle, by the Missal's heading. Event: Cana and Capharnaum, in Galilee (4:46)	Event: The healing of the ruler's son at Cana, A.D. 26–27 (derived). Composition – disputed: c. A.D. 90–100; A.D. 96–100.
<i>Narrated event: "the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judea into Galilee" (4:54); the word is spoken at Cana, and the fever leaves the boy at Capharnaum at the same hour (4:52).</i>			
The event's year is derived from the reckoning from the founding of Rome in A. J. Maas's "Jesus Christ" (<i>Catholic Encyclopedia</i> , vol. 8, 1910); the two composition dates, both disputed, are from its "The New Testament" (vol. 14) and "The Gospel of Saint John" (vol. 8).			
Epistle	Eph 5:15–21	Paul, "a prisoner in the Lord" (4:1), in Caesarea or Rome; to "the saints who are at Ephesus" (1:1)	Composition – disputed: A.D. 58–63; A.D. 61. Composition (Catholic critical chronology, for comparison) – disputed: Ephesians under the later-disciple hypothesis (approximate), c. A.D. 80–100.
Traditional attribution: St Paul, who names himself (1:1) and writes as "an ambassador in a chain" (6:20). The disputed range is the <i>Catholic Encyclopedia's</i> "Epistle to the Ephesians" (vol. 5, 1909), for which Caesarea or Rome "is still a much mooted question", and the disputed year its "St. Paul" (vol. 11, 1911). Shown last is the modern critical horizon: the <i>New American Bible, Revised Edition's</i> later disciple, around A.D. 80–100, one possible explanation and not the default answer.			

The Propers: Themes and Movement

This Mass asks God for life and is answered with his word. It opens with a people in exile confessing that it has disobeyed God's commandments, sets at its centre a father who asks Christ to come down to his dying son and is sent home with a word instead, and ends by asking that those who have received the sacred gifts may always obey the commandments the opening confessed broken. Between confession and obedience stand a road, a song and a hope, and the hope rests on a word that has been spoken and not yet seen fulfilled.

The Introit is cut from the prayer that Azarias prayed in the furnace at Babylon (Dan 3:25–45). In the Missal's form it confesses first and asks after: all that God has done to his people he has done *in vero iudicio*, in true judgment, *quia peccavimus tibi, et mandatis tuis non oboedivimus*; then, *sed da gloriam nomini tuo*, glorify thy name and deal with us according to the multitude of thy mercy. The prayer it is cut from belongs to a people that has lost "prince, or leader, or prophet, or holocaust, or sacrifice" (3:38) and offers instead "a contrite heart and humble spirit". The priest says those words at every Mass when he has offered the chalice, *In spiritu humilitatis et in animo contrito suscipiamur a te, Domine* (*Ordo Missae*, no. 1033). The verse after the antiphon is the first of the longest psalm: "Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord." A people that confesses it has not obeyed is shown at once the road of obedience.

The Collect asks two gifts of a God *placatus*, as one appeased: *indulgentiam* and *pacem*, pardon and then peace, so that the faithful may be cleansed from every offence and serve him *secura mente*, with a mind at rest. The Epistle begins with the verse's own verb, *Videte quomodo caute ambuletis*, walk carefully, *non quasi insipientes, sed ut sapientes*. St Paul writes it to Gentiles who were "heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord" (Eph 5:8), and tells them how to spend their time in a hostile world: "redeeming the time, because the days are evil"; understanding "what is the will of God"; filled not with wine but with the Holy Spirit; *cantantes, et psallentes in cordibus vestris Domino*, singing and making melody in their hearts to the Lord; and "Giving thanks always for all things". Its last verse, "Being subject one to another, in the fear of Christ", turns the letter to the household.

Between the lessons the Gradual lifts *Oculi omnium*, the eyes of all, to the God who gives them food *in tempore opportuno*, in due season, and fills *omne animal*, every living creature, with blessing; the psalm goes on to say that "The Lord is just in all his ways" (Ps 144:17), the confession with which the Introit began. The Alleluia sings the heart the Epistle asked for, and in its two verbs: *Paratum cor meum, Deus, paratum cor meum: cantabo, et psallam tibi, gloria mea*. Where the Vulgate reads *psallam in gloria mea*, the Missal addresses the song to God and names him the singer's glory.

The Gospel is the second sign that Jesus did in Galilee. St John sets it after two days among the Samaritans, of whom "many more believed in him, because of his own word" (Jn 4:41), and after the saying "that a prophet hath no honour in his own country" (4:44). A royal official, *regulus*, whose son *incipiebat mori*, was beginning to die at Capharnaum, comes to Jesus and asks him to come down and heal him. Jesus answers with a rebuke: *Nisi signa et prodigia videritis, non creditis*. The father asks again, *Domine, descende priusquam moriatur filius meus*, and is given not a presence but a word: *Vade, filius tuus vivit. Credidit homo sermoni, quem dixit ei Iesus, et ibat*: the man believed the word and went. On the road his servants meet him; he asks the hour, and they answer *heri hora septima*, yesterday at the seventh hour; it was the hour of the word, *et credidit ipse, et domus eius tota*. The Missal begins the lesson after the mention of Cana and ends it before the evangelist counts the sign, so that it reads the healing alone. It moves from asking, through a word believed in absence, to a faith that reaches a whole household.

The Offertory turns from the healed house back to exile. *Super flumina Babylonis illic sedimus, et flevimus: dum recordaremur tui, Sion*: by the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept, remembering thee, Sion. The Missal's *tui* speaks to a city remembered and not seen. The psalm's next verses ask, "How shall we sing the song of the Lord in a strange land?" (Ps 136:4), the question the Epistle and the Alleluia have already

answered, and end in a curse on Babylon's little ones that the Mass does not sing (136:9). The Secret asks that *haec mysteria* furnish *caelestem . . . medicinam*, heavenly medicine, and purge the vices of the heart; its vocabulary meets the Gospel's sick son and the fever that left him, and the mysteries are the subject of both its verbs.

The Communion returns to Ps 118, whose first verse the Introit sang: *Memento verbi tui servo tuo, Domine, in quo mihi spem dedisti: haec me consolata est in humilitate mea*. Remember thy word, in which thou hast given me hope; this has comforted me in my humiliation. Azarias had prayed *sumusque humiles in universa terra hodie propter peccata nostra*, we are brought low in all the earth this day for our sins (Dan 3:37); the Communion finds comfort in that same lowliness. The psalm gives the reason the Mass leaves unsung, *quia eloquium tuum vivificavit me*, because thy word has given me life, and the Gospel's word was *Filius tuus vivit*. The Postcommunion asks that those who have received may be made worthy of the sacred gifts, *fac nos . . . tuis semper oboedire mandatis*. Its noun and its verb are the Introit's, so that the Mass ends by asking for the obedience it began by confessing it had not given.

Three threads run through the whole. The first is a word given in absence: the promise the Communion recalls, the word Christ speaks instead of coming down, the Sion that is remembered and not seen, and the mysteries in which the Secret asks a cure. The second is the condition of those who pray: sinners and exiles, in evil days and humiliation, fed in due season and not before. The third is the voice they pray with: a confession and a lament that are first Israel's, from the furnace and the rivers of Babylon, beside chants of all eyes and every living creature and an Epistle to Gentiles made light.

Three readings of the whole Mass grow from three questions, each developed at length in the full study with four senses of its own. The first asks what faith Christ asks of the father and why he heals by a word without going down. St Gregory the Great answers that the father sought the bodily presence of one who was absent nowhere; St John Chrysostom, that Christ healed the father's mind together with the son's body, teaching him to attend to his word and not to his signs. The reading hears the Introit's confession, the Collect's mind at rest, the Gradual's waiting and the Communion's hope as the school of that faith. The second asks how a people that has sinned and lives in exile is to pray, sing and spend its time. It is heard from the Introit, the Offertory and the Epistle: St Augustine reads the rivers of Babylon as all that is loved here and passes, beside which the citizens of Jerusalem sit and weep; St Hilary of Poitiers, as the soul's exile since Adam from the heavenly Jerusalem, its mother. The third asks whose story the healing at Capernaum tells and whose voices the Mass lets us hear. St Augustine reads the episode in its chapter, as a figure of the people of the Jews, who saw signs and scarcely believed, and of the nations, who believe having seen none; St Thomas Aquinas reads the ruler as one of the Fathers of the Old Testament praying for a sick people.

The three hold less in common than their shared Gospel suggests. All three hear the Postcommunion's *oboedire mandatis* answer the Introit's *non oboedivimus*, begin from the Introit's confession though each hears it differently, and give the Communion's hope in God's word a place. The first and third take the Gospel's word as the hinge of the Mass; the second gives the Gospel a supporting place and centres on the chants and the Epistle. None of them denies what another holds, and the differences inside them are real: how much the ruler believed when he came, what the willows of Babylon are, whom the ruler figures, and whose exile the Offertory first voices. The commentary that follows sets the readings' answers beside one another at the points where the texts put the same question to all three.

The Propers: Detailed Commentary

What the father asked, and what he was given

The Gospel turns on a rebuke. A man comes to ask his son's life and hears, "Unless you see signs and wonders, you believe not." St Gregory the Great, preaching on this Gospel at the basilica of the martyrs Nereus and Achilleus, says that the Gospel needs exhortation more than exposition and that only this needs explaining. The man plainly believed, for *neque enim ab eo quaereret salutem quem non crederet salvatorem*: he would not have asked salvation of one he did not believe a saviour. His request shows where the faith failed. *Poposcit namque ut descenderet, et sanaret filium ejus. Corporalem ergo praesentiam Domini quaerebat, qui per spiritum nusquam deerat*. He asked the Lord to come down, and so sought the bodily presence of one who, *per spiritum*, was nowhere absent; he honoured not majesty but bodily presence. The Lord's answer corrects that faith by what it does: *solo jussu salutem reddidit qui voluntate omnia creavit*, he who created all things by his will gave health by his command alone (*Homiliae in Evangelia* 28, 1). For Gregory the word is enough because of who speaks it.

St John Chrysostom grants the ruler a faith and finds it unsound: "if this ruler also believed, yet he believed not entirely or soundly, as is clear from his enquiring 'at what hour the fever left him.'" He reads the rebuke as a kindness aimed at the father: Christ "toucheth his conscience, to show that His miracles were wrought principally for the sake of the soul. For here He healeth the father, sick in mind, no less than the son, in order to persuade us to give heed to Him, not by reason of His miracles, but of His teaching" (*Homilies on St John* 35, 2). Gregory teaches who it is that heals at a distance; Chrysostom, what that healing does to the man who receives the word. The first reading of the Mass is built on both, the object of faith and its growth.

The Fathers do not agree on how much the man believed when he came. St Augustine reads the rebuke at its full weight: Christ "shows us a man lukewarm, or cold in faith, or of no faith at all", and since "himself believed" comes only after the hour is known, "it follows that when he was making the request he did not yet believe" (*Tractates on John* 16, 3). St Cyril of Alexandria sees a faith real but childish. The ruler "cometh as to One able to heal, but he understandeth not yet that He is by Nature God"; yet Christ "doth not reject our lack of apprehension; but benefiteth even the stumbling", and "The one command of the Saviour healeth two souls" (*Commentary on John* II.5). Bl. Ildefonso Schuster, expounding this Mass, says that the ruler "had faith in Jesus", which Christ desired "first of all to purify . . . from any material element and from all idea of self-interest", requiring him "to believe in his word without actually beholding the cure" (*The Sacramentary* III, p. 176). St Thomas Aquinas gathers the answers into a sequence. The man's faith was weak when he first interceded, firmer when he called Jesus Lord, more perfect when he believed the word and went, and perfected when he learned the hour and believed with his house; the evangelist's *et ibat* means that he went on growing, because on the way of God not to go forward is to go back (*Super Ioannem* c. 4, lect. 7). So Augustine and Gregory differ on the faith that came, and Chrysostom, Cyril, Schuster and Aquinas stand between them; but Augustine, Chrysostom, Cyril and Aquinas agree that a fuller faith followed the word, and the Gospel's last clause bears them out.

A second question sharpens the first. The same Lord who would not go down to the ruler's son offered to go to the centurion's slave (Mt 8:7). Gregory reads the contrast as a rebuke to pride, which honours in men their wealth and rank and not the nature made to God's image: *Ecce de coelo venit qui servo in terra occurrere non despicit*, he who came from heaven does not disdain to go to meet a slave on earth (28, 2). Chrysostom answers from the two men's faith: "in the former case faith had been perfected, and therefore He undertook to go", while the ruler "knew not yet clearly that even when absent He could heal". Augustine answers from their humility, and so opens the third reading: the centurion "declared himself unworthy of His presence", the ruler "sought His presence by force"; "Here is a ceding to loftiness; there, a conceding to humility" (16, 5). For Gregory the difference lies in the honour men give, for Chrysostom in a faith not yet complete, for Augustine in the lowliness that believes a word can work at a distance.

The rebuke is hard, and the witnesses weigh it differently. Chrysostom, Cyril and Aquinas hold that it served the man; Aquinas adds, after 1 Cor 14:22, that it fell on one instructed in the law who sought to believe by signs, since signs are given to unbelievers and the faithful are led by the Scriptures. Augustine does not soften it, and sets the man beside St Thomas the Apostle, to whom it was said, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (16, 4). Signs are not made worthless. The healing is itself a sign, the second at Cana, and Gregory says elsewhere that visible miracles were given *ut corda videntium ad fidem invisibilium pertrahant*, to draw the hearts of those who saw them to faith in what is unseen (*Homiliae in Evangelia* 4, 3). The father was given both, in an order that matters: the word first, believed; the sign after, found true at the hour of the word. “What now are we taught by these things?” Chrysostom asks. “Not to wait for miracles, nor to seek pledges of the Power of God” (35, 3). He draws that lesson into a household’s life: many give thanks when a child recovers, and they ought to give thanks “even if they obtain it not”.

One household, or two peoples

Augustine reads the healing a second way, in its chapter, and the third reading is built on that sequence. His sixteenth *Tractate* begins from a puzzle: going from Samaria, where he was honoured, into Galilee, where he was brought up, Jesus “gave testimony that a prophet hath no honour in his own country” (Jn 4:44). “In Samaria He spent two days, and the Samaritans believed on Him; many were the days He spent in Galilee, and yet the Galileans did not believe on Him.” “At His discourse alone many of the Samaritans believed; at that miracle, in the place where it was wrought, only that house believed” (16, 3). A *prodigium*, he says, is so called *quod porro dicat*, because it betokens something to come, and these events betoken the order of salvation: “Let us, I say, assume the Lord’s own country to mean the people of the Jews.” Then he turns to his hearers: “I am speaking to God’s people; so many of us have believed, what signs have we seen?” The blessing spoken to St Thomas goes to them: “We are the persons here foretold” (16, 4).

Aquinas sets the father on the other side of the same history. Reading the episode allegorically, he makes the ruler Abraham, or one of the Fathers of the Old Testament, and the son the people of Israel, sick with depraved pleasures and teachings in Capharnaum, whose name he renders “abundance”: the abundance of which Moses sang, “The beloved grew fat, and kicked” (Deut 32:15). The ruler’s plea is the Fathers’ intercession for their people, as Jeremias is called “a lover of his brethren, and of the people of Israel” (2 Mac 15:14); the cure comes by the word at the seventh hour, which signifies the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, by whom sins are forgiven; and the slowness of the Galileans beside the Samaritans is the slowness with which Israel came to the faith, little by little, like grapes gleaned after the vintage (Mic 7:1). Augustine and Aquinas agree that the episode figures the relation of Israel and the nations to Christ’s word and that Israel’s patriarchs keep their honour. They disagree on what the father figures: for Augustine he belongs to the country that needed signs, for Aquinas he is the patriarch who intercedes for it. St Cyril gives a third identification. The evangelist’s aim, he says, was “to shew how superior in obedience were the aliens to the Jews”, and the ruler, who “believed with his whole house”, stands beside the Samaritans among the obedient.

Aquinas himself shows how the first and third readings relate. The same lecture that traces one man’s faith from weakness to its perfection reads him, at another sense of the text, as the Fathers praying for their people. The two readings answer different questions of the same words: what faith the word asks of a believer, and whose history the healing figures. Neither denies the other.

The third reading can be heard as setting Israel against the Church, and its witnesses say both more and less than that. Augustine draws St Paul’s olive from the centurion: the proud branches broken, the humble wild olive grafted in, “nevertheless let the root remain . . . Where does the root remain? In the patriarchs”; and they are “In rest with God, in great honor” (16, 5). He ends with the country Christ founded, from Sion, of the Virgin Mary: “He had no honor in His country, wherein He was formed; let Him have honor in the country which He has formed” (16, 7). Cyril, who says that Israel “with reason falleth from the hope”,

ends in hope: those set in the first rank “because of the election of the fathers, will come last and after the calling of the Gentiles. For when the fulness of the Gentiles is come in, then shall all Israel be saved” (*Commentary on John* II.5, after Rom 11:25–26). Augustine’s conclusion is humility for the grafted branch, which stands by faith and not by birth; Aquinas’s, the intercession of the Fathers for their people; Cyril’s, hope.

The Gospel’s last words, *et credidit ipse, et domus eius tota*, show where the readings meet and part. In the first they end one man’s growth in faith, from need, through trust in a word, to belief with his house. In the third they figure the whole house: the people whose Fathers prayed for it and the nations grafted beside it. The second reading does not take up those words. It reads the father’s journey as one exile’s crisis in a world that passes. Gregory preached in a time when, he says, *Ubique mors, ubique luctus, ubique desolatio*, and the world that once held men by delight *tantis plagis plenus est, ut ipse nos jam mundus mittat ad Deum*, is so full of blows that it sends us to God itself (28, 3). That world sends the father to Christ, and the word that reaches his son is the word St Jerome finds in the furnace: the angel who goes down into the fire is *sermo divinus*, the divine word, which comes to the soul that has despaired of human help and turned wholly to the Lord (*Commentarii in Daniele*, on 3:49).

The confession at the entrance

All three readings begin at the Introit, and each hears its confession differently. Two of them hear it through St Augustine’s account of how the saints pray. Expounding the Gradual’s psalm at “The Lord is just in all his ways”, he writes: *omnes sancti in tribulationibus constituti, prius justitiam ejus laudaverunt, et sic beneficia petiverunt. Prius dixerunt: Justum est quod facis. Sic rogavit Daniel: all the saints, set in tribulation, first praised his justice and so asked his benefits; so Daniel asked* (*Enarrationes in Psalmos* 144, on v. 17). “First they praised Him scourging,” runs the English, “and so they felt Him feeding.” The first reading takes that order as the beginning the father’s faith needed: with God and his justice, not with the sign. The second takes it as the exile’s first word, the confession of a people that has lost its city.

St Jerome gives that confession its rule and its limit. On Azarias’s first verse he writes, *Quando diversis premimur angustiiis, ex toto cordis hoc loquamur affectu, et quidquid nobis acciderit, juste nos sustinere fateamur*: when we are pressed by distresses of every kind, let us confess with the whole heart that whatever has befallen us we bear justly. But *et certe tres pueri non peccaverant*: the three youths had not sinned, and were not of an age to be punished for their own faults when they were carried to Babylon; *ergo . . . ex persona populi loquuntur*, they speak in the person of the people (*Commentarii in Daniele*, on 3:26, 29). Jerome closes the hard reading of the Introit, that all suffering is the sufferer’s own punishment; Augustine sets the confession in the order of prayer, not in an account of the causes of every pain. And Jerome gives the Church leave to pray the prayer as hers, *si quando Ecclesiae propter peccata populi . . . sustinent penuriam, et quando in persecutionibus non offertur sacrificium et oblatio*, whenever the Churches suffer want for the people’s sins, and when in persecution the sacrifice is not offered (on 3:37).

Here the second and third readings meet. For the second, the innocent youths teach the Church in exile to confess God’s justice with and for a people. For the third, the Introit is Israel’s own confession, which the Church prays as hers in the way Azarias prayed it, for a people whose sin he had not committed. Jerome’s *ex persona populi* serves both.

The Introit’s verse, *Beati immaculati in via: qui ambulant in lege Domini*, is heard three ways. For the first reading the way is Christ. St Hilary of Poitiers recalls *Ego sum via* and insists that the way is *non solum ineunda . . . sed etiam pergenda*, to be walked to its end and not only entered (*Tractatus super Psalmos*, in Ps. 118, *Aleph* 2), and Cassiodorus takes the way to be the Lord Saviour, walked with the steps of good action. Neither speaks of the Gospel; but the father walks such a road, *Credidit homo sermoni . . . et ibat*, before he knows what he will find at its end. For the second reading the verse names the exiles’ road home. Augustine makes it the divine voice recalling everyone who seeks blessedness by evil roads: *si ergo vis*

esse beatus, esto immaculatus. . . . Sed ubi erit quisque immaculatus, nisi in via? In qua via, nisi in lege Domini? and to the lustful, the avaricious and the ambitious, *Quo itis? Peritis, et nescitis* (*Enarrationes in Psalmos* 118, sermo 1, 1). Hilary reads the verse as the first stage of an ascent, in which the undefiled curb the flesh and conquer avarice before they search God's testimonies; St Robert Bellarmine sets the law of the Lord against the way of concupiscence, "full of the dust of pride, the mud of luxury, and the dirty water of avarice". The road out of Babylon is the keeping of the commandments the exiles confess they broke. For the third reading Cassiodorus supplies another voice: the whole of Ps 118 is spoken by the single chorus of the saints, from the world's beginning to its end, set forth as one speaker for the unity of the Church. The blessing of those who walk in the law is then spoken by the saints of both peoples together.

The orations carry the confession forward. Schuster expounds the order of the Collect's two gifts: "Peace comes after mercy, for as long as grace has not blotted out the sin, the heart, torn by remorse, weakened by its own passions and at war with itself, cannot find peace" (p. 175). The first reading hears in *secura mente* the mind the father went home with, at rest before the proof arrived. The Collect asks that mind through pardon, and Cassiodorus says that the faithful say the Alleluia's *Paratum cor meum* rightly when they trust that their sins are forgiven by God's gift. The second hears the orations of exiles who have confessed: Sicard of Cremona and William Durandus, expounding these chants of captivity, say that the bodily captivity signifies our spiritual one and that the return from it is the remission of sins (*Mitrale* VIII.20; *Rationale* VI.137). The third hears *fidelibus tuis* as the faithful of every people grafted in. And the Postcommunion's *oboedire mandatis*, the one answer all three readings give the Introit's *non oboedivimus*, is in the first the word received becoming the word obeyed, in the second the exiles' road home, and in the third the law given to Israel asked now of all who receive the gifts. Dom Lucien Fromage, in the continuation of *The Liturgical Year*, joins it to the altar: "A persevering fidelity in observing God's commandments is the best preparation a christian can make for approaching to the holy Table."

By the rivers of Babylon

St Augustine preached on the Offertory's psalm on a day when it had been sung, and the second reading takes its programme from that sermon. "The waters of Babylon are all things which here are loved, and pass away." One man loves farming, another soldiering, another office; let each see "that what he hath loved is not a foundation of Jerusalem, but a stream of Babylon". The citizens of Jerusalem do not throw themselves in: "Sit 'by' the waters, not 'in' the waters, not 'under' the waters; but yet sit, in humble fashion." Their tears are not Babylon's: "If thou weepest in the remembrance of Sion, thou oughtest to weep even when it is well with thee in Babylon." Their instruments are "God's Scriptures, God's commands, God's promises, meditation on the life to come", hung on the willows, barren trees watered by Babylon, because such men are unfit to carry them (*Enarrationes in Psalmos* 136, on vv. 1–2). He asks that the song be done as well as sung, *oportet ut non tantum ista decantemus, sed et faciamus*, and ends, *Fratres, organa in operando non cessent; vobis invicem cantate cantica Sion*: brothers, let your instruments not rest in your work; sing to one another the songs of Sion.

St Hilary reads the same psalm more inwardly. Its captivity is spiritual; Sion is the seat of eternal blessedness, *mater coelestis nobis Jerusalem*, and man has been exiled from her since Adam's sin. The rivers are the works of the age and of the body, which flow past; the willows, which revive in water, are the saints, revived by the word of God and the water of baptism (Isa 44:4); the instruments are our bodies, hung up in continence (*Tractatus super Psalmos*, in Ps. 136). Augustine and Hilary disagree within a shared reading. For Augustine, and for Bellarmine after him, the willows are barren men; for Hilary, and for Cassiodorus, they are saints. The instruments are the Scriptures for Augustine and our bodies for Hilary, and Cassiodorus takes Augustine's instruments and Hilary's willows, the Scriptures hung on holy men. Cassiodorus draws a posture from *super flumina*, the freed sitting on the banks and not in the stream, and calls the singing of psalms the consolation of those who weep and a remedy of the soul.

The other two readings hear the chant differently. For the first, the Offertory weeps for a Sion remembered and not seen, and faith of the father's kind lives on a word held in absence. For the third, the chant is first Israel's. Fromage gives the Mass's chants to two choirs: "The Gentile-Choir takes the Gradual and Communion-Anthem; the Choir of the Jews, the Introit and Offertory". "In the Introit, the Jewish people sang its repentance and humble confidence", and in the Offertory Israel, grown repentant, "joins our Mother the Church" in the psalm of exile (*The Liturgical Year* XI, pp. 439, 447, 451). Here the readings meet a real tension. Fromage hears Israel's voice first in the Offertory; Augustine's sermon hears in the same verse the Church's own captivity. Both are traditional answers, and they differ on whose exile the chant first voices. Jerome's youths, who confess for a people they belong to, show how one voice can carry both.

The second reading alone faces the end of the psalm, which the Mass does not sing: "Blessed be he that shall take and dash thy little ones against the rock" (Ps 136:9). Augustine asks, "What are the little ones of Babylon? Evil desires at their birth", and answers the fear that the dashed may not die: "Dash it against the Rock; and that Rock is Christ." Hilary reads the little ones as *tenera adhuc corporis vitia*, the body's vices while still tender, since *Petra autem, secundum Apostolum, Christus est* (in Ps. 136, 14), and Cassiodorus as the flesh's errors while they are small. Bellarmine makes the little ones persons: Babylon's young, converted and brought "to the rock, Christ, to get a fortunate dash against it, and die the death of the old man, to rise a new man"; and, morally, those not yet deeply stained, for "blessed is he, who, by a happy dash on the rock, kills sin". Chrysostom reads no figure in the verse at all: the words are the captives' own anger, which the prophet reports and does not make his own, and the New Covenant commands that we feed our enemies and pray for those who abuse us. Four witnesses make the rock Christ; three of them make the little ones sins at their birth, and the fourth persons brought to Christ to die to sin. Chrysostom alone leaves the verse as the captives' passion and answers it with the Gospel.

How to sing the Lord's song in a strange land

The captives ask, *Quomodo cantabimus canticum Domini in terra aliena?* The Epistle answers them before the Offertory is sung, and the Alleluia answers in the Epistle's own verbs, *cantantes, et psallentes* there, *cantabo, et psallam* here. St Jerome reads "redeeming the time" as the wise man buying back what malice had sold, *dies malos in bonos vertimus*, we turn evil days into good, as no change of times changed Joseph or Job. "Singing and making melody in your hearts" is a warning to singers: *Deo non voce, sed corde cantandum*, God is to be sung to not with the voice but with the heart, and a singer of poor voice whose works are good *dulcis apud Deum cantor est*. "Giving thanks always for all things" reaches loss: if a house falls or wife and children are taken captive, the Christian says, *Benedictus Deus, minora me scio sustinere quam mereor*, blessed be God, I know that I suffer less than I deserve (*Commentarii in Epistolam ad Ephesios* III, on 5:16, 19, 20). Chrysostom gives the same verses the exile's turn: "The time is not yours. At present ye are strangers, and sojourners, and foreigners, and aliens"; "only preserve the principal thing, I mean the faith". Against drunkenness he sets the psalms, "For they who sing psalms are filled with the Holy Spirit", and he reads "with your hearts" as "with close attention and understanding" (*Homilies on Ephesians* 19). Jerome subordinates the voice to the heart and Chrysostom asks for the voice with attention; both oppose singing that seeks only to please, and Bellarmine, on the Offertory's psalm, makes that the fault of those who sing the Lord's song in a strange land.

The first reading hears a different demand in the Epistle. Its *intellegentes quae sit voluntas Dei* is, for Aquinas, the first principle of the prudence the Apostle asks, as the Lord's Prayer asks *Fiat voluntas tua* (*In Epistolam ad Ephesios* c. 5, lect. 6). The father's going was such prudence: he acted on a will declared to him in a word. The third reading hears the Epistle's addressees: Gentile Ephesians who were "heretofore darkness, but now light in the Lord" (Eph 5:8), and whose new life the lesson describes.

The Alleluia's verse is also Ps 56:8, and one sentence of Augustine on it serves two readings in two ways: "the patience of good men with preparation of heart accepteth the will of God". The first reading takes the acceptance. Augustine sets the prepared heart against what others prepare, "He hath prepared pit

to deceive, shall I not prepare heart to suffer?”, and Bellarmine makes it a whole surrender, “ready to take anything cheerfully from your hand”. The father had fixed the means of his son’s healing, that Christ should come down, and was given another, a word in place of a presence; he took it and went, with the heart the Alleluia sings, as Chrysostom asks every household to give thanks “even if they obtain it not”. The second reading takes the song. Augustine goes on, “and glorieth in tribulations”, and his example is St Paul in chains: “Whence, but that prepared was his heart? Therefore he was singing and playing” (*Enarrationes in Psalmos* 56, on v. 8). The captives could not sing the Lord’s song for their captors; the prepared heart sings it to God, *psallam tibi*. Schuster reads the Missal’s *gloria mea* of God, the soul’s glory “also because he alone is the just judge of our merits”. The glory the verse sings is God himself, and not the honour that, Gregory says, pride pays to rank and Christ would not pay to the ruler’s.

The third reading follows the psalm one verse further than the Mass: “I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: and I will sing unto thee among the nations” (Ps 107:4). Cassiodorus reads that confession among the peoples and that song among the nations as the Church gathered first from the Jews and then from the Gentiles.

Fed in due season, and a word remembered

The Gradual and the Communion share a posture: those who pray have been promised something and have not yet received it. Augustine reads the Gradual’s due time as a physician’s care, “Just as when thou refreshest a sick man in due season, when he ought to receive, then Thou givest”, and says to anyone who has asked and not received, “let his eyes wait for the food, which He giveth in due season . . . Thou delayest, not deniest” (*Enarrationes in Psalmos* 144, on vv. 15–16). The first and second readings both use the sentence, for different waitings. In the first it is the father’s night between the word and the news, *heri hora septima*, the food come in its season. For that faith in a word unseen, Schuster reads the Gradual’s food as the Eucharist: the bread God prepares “in every region of the earth” is given under “the veil of faith, in order that we may have all the merit of believing in the pure and single word of the Son of God” (pp. 175–176). In the second it is the exiles’, fed and waiting. For the third reading the Gradual’s words are universal, *Oculi omnium* and *omne animal*, and Fromage gives the chant to the Gentile choir.

The Communion asks God to remember his word, and its witnesses take the request as a prayer that God fulfil a promise. Augustine: “When therefore it is said unto Him, ‘O remember,’ the desire of him who prayeth is displayed, because he asketh for what was promised . . . that is, fulfil Thy promise to Thy servant” (118, sermo 15, on v. 49). Bellarmine adds why the promise must be asked: God “still wishes his faithful servants to ask him to carry them out; and thus, prayer becomes one of the means through which God decreed to fulfill his promises”. The readings then hear different speakers. In the first it is the father, whose double petition was answered by a word to be believed. In the second it is the Church in exile. Augustine reads the humiliation as tribulation and says, “This hope was given to Christ’s Body, that is, to the Church, that it might be a comfort to Her in her humiliation” (on v. 50), and Hilary hears in it the comfort every word of God gives in sickness, persecution, loss and bereavement, since each calls us to the hope of heavenly goods. In the third it is the Church of the nations, hoping in a word first given to Israel’s father. Bellarmine names the promise: “when you said to Abraham, and through him to all his children, ‘Walk before me, and be perfect;’ I will be ‘thy reward exceedingly great.’” The verse the Communion leaves unsung gives the first reading its last link: *quia eloquium tuum vivificavit me*, because thy word has given me life, beside the Gospel’s *Filius tuus vivit*.

The Secret carries the father’s situation to the altar. Fromage joins it to this Gospel: “The whole power of the God, who, with a word, cures both soul and body, resides in the Mysteries which are about to be celebrated on our Altar here”; and, of the father’s plea that Christ come down, “our Jesus has no need to come down from heaven to earth, in order to give efficiency to the commands of his gracious will” (*The Liturgical Year* XI, p. 451). Schuster asks of the same prayer “that the holy Sacrament may be to us a spiritual medicine and antidote, to protect us from the virus of sin which poisons our blood” (p. 177). The

second reading sets the Secret’s medicine beside Cassiodorus’s remedy of the soul in the exiles’ psalmody; the third, beside the cure that Aquinas’s sick son, the people grown fat on abundance, needed.

The readings end in three hopes, and each is its own. For the first, the father’s road home between the word and the sight of its fulfilment is the life of faith, which ends when the promise is kept and seen; Schuster says that “the blessed enjoy that same truth which sustains us here on earth; but they enjoy it without any veil, face to face” (p. 176). For the second, the memory of Sion is longing for the city: “whither your hope goeth before, let your life follow . . . Your captivity will pass away, your happiness will come; the last enemy shall be destroyed, and we shall triumph with our King, without death” (Augustine, on Ps 136). For the third, the healing of a whole house at Capharnaum looks to the healing of both peoples in the one house of God: “then shall all Israel be saved” (Cyril). The second reading makes no claim about the other two, but set beside them it gives them a setting. The father who walks home on a word, and the nations who believe without signs, are both on the road of exiles who remember Sion.

Appendix: Scope and Qualifications

Edition, formulary and occurrence. This concise study treats the Mass *Dominica vigesima post Pentecosten*, II classis, of the *Missale Romanum*, editio typica, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis 1962, pp. 412–413, nos. 1689–1698, in the universal 1962 calendar and no particular calendar. Its occurrence on 11 October 2026, its precedence over the feast of the Maternity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the commemoration of that feast in low and conventual Masses and its omission in a sung Mass that is not conventual, the colour, the Credo and the Trinity Preface rest on the Missal’s own calendar and general rubrics (RG 16, 108, 111, 127 b; RGMR 434, 437 a, 475 a, 494 b). The commemorated orations, which the full study prints, are not studied here.

Relation to the full study. Every claim here is drawn from the full study of this same formulary, the Full PDF subtitled *The word that heals from afar, the song of the exiles, and the two peoples: a study of the proper in three readings*, which prints the appointed Latin with its public-domain English, treats each element in its own setting, and develops the three readings at length, each with its own four senses; nothing evidence-dependent is added here. The four rows on the first page orient a reader and do not replace those readings’ own senses. The map and the dossier’s explanatory rows condense the study’s. Each Father and later writer is cited only for what he said of his own passage, and each liturgical commentator only for what he says of the elements of this formulary he names.

Text, English and rights. Every Latin form of the ten elements was read for the study on the page images of the CMAA facsimile of the typical edition and collated with the Pustet *Missale Romanum* of Ratisbon, 1862, in which each element’s wording already stands; the collation is in **propers/verified.md**. The Introit’s antiphon is a cento of words from Dan 3:29–43 that no witness read carries in the Missal’s form, and the Latin source of the Gradual’s *illis escam*, the Alleluia’s *psallam tibi, gloria mea* and the Communion’s added *Domine* was not found in the Vulgate, the Greek Psalter or the Latin Fathers read; no Roman or Old Latin psalter and no chant manuscript was consulted. Psalms are cited in the Missal’s Vulgate numbering, with the Hebrew numbering added in the map and the dossier. The scriptural English is the Douay–Rheims in Challoner’s revision at the canonical verses, so that it does not render the Missal’s Latin where a chant departs from its verse; the English of the Introit’s antiphon and of the three orations is the anonymous translation printed by Cummiskey in Philadelphia in 1861. Neither is an approved liturgical translation of the 1962 Missal. The English of St Augustine, St John Chrysostom and St Cyril of Alexandria is that of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers and the Library of the Fathers; English beside the Latin of St Gregory, St Jerome, St Hilary and St Augustine is a gloss of that Latin. The Latin of the formulary rests on its public-domain antecedent, the Pustet Missal (17 U.S.C. 103(b)); the Douay–Rheims, the 1861 English, Migne’s texts, the nineteenth-century translations of the Fathers, O’Sullivan’s English of Bellarmine, the 1883 English of the continuation of *The Liturgical Year* and the 1927 English of Schuster’s *Sacramentary* are in the public domain in the United States. St Gregory’s Latin is quoted from the Latin Wikisource transcription of the *Homiliarum in Evangelia*, licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0, with attribution to its contributors at https://la.wikisource.org/wiki/Homiliarum_in_Evangelia. Cassiodorus in the *Corpus Christianorum* edition and the *New American Bible* introductions are described or summarised, not reproduced.

Reception and its limits. The witnesses named here are those the study’s sweep read at the loci below. St Augustine’s expositions of Pss 118, 136 and 144, St Hilary’s tractates and St Jerome’s commentary on Ephesians were read where their Latin is quoted on page images of Migne’s *Patrologia Latina*; St Gregory’s homily in the Wikisource transcription of Migne’s text. St Thomas Aquinas, Cassiodorus, St John Chrysostom’s Greek exposition of Ps 136, Sicard and Durandus were read in text layers or a restricted scan and are described, not quoted. Among the witnesses not reached are Origen’s commentary on St John, St Ambrose on Ps 118, Theodoret and St Athanasius on the psalms, Theophylact on Ephesians, the Breviary’s homily for this Sunday and St Alphonsus Liguori’s Sunday sermons.

Chronology and records. The Date cells on the second page come from the Scripture chronology corpus through the record generated for this formulary, with one declared comparison under its critical profile for the Epistle; the explanatory rows say

which source each date comes from and how it is qualified. The search, its loci, the disagreements and the negative results are in `research/scope.md`, the reasoning behind the three readings in `research/interpretations.md`, and this companion's production record in `research/production-review.md`.

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