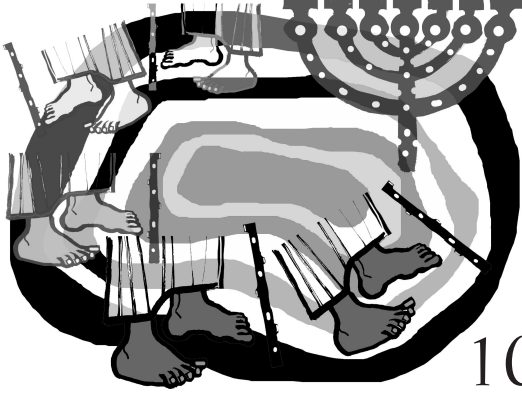


1-2 CHRONICLES



1 CHRONICLES

Read 1 Chronicles 1:1–27

Before Chronicles tells its story of the two Israelite kingdoms, it provides nine chapters of genealogies. These begin with a genealogy from Adam to Abraham. Most of the information given is similar to the genealogical data in Genesis 5, 10, and 11. In its own way, Chronicles wishes its readers to see the story of Israel against the wider backdrop of the story of the entire human family. The biblical tradition believes that God called Israel to be a blessing (Gen 12:3) and a light (Isa 42:6).

Reflect: Do people experience me as a source of blessing and light in their lives? Do I recognize the gift that all nations are to the human family? Do I recognize that all people belong to the one human family?

Pray: Thank God for the gifts that every nation offers to the human family. Pray that all people may enjoy the blessings of peace.

Act: Make the effort to become acquainted with a culture other than your own, focusing on the religious and moral values of that culture.

From Adam to Abraham

1 Adam, Seth, Enosh; ² Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared; ³ Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech; ⁴ Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

⁵ The descendants of Japheth: Gomer, Magog, Madai, Javan, Tubal, Meshech, and Tiras. ⁶ The descendants of Gomer: Ashkenaz, Diphath,^a and Togarmah. ⁷ The descendants of Javan: Elishah, Tarshish, Kittim, and Rodanim.^b

⁸ The descendants of Ham: Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. ⁹ The descendants of Cush: Seba, Havilah, Sabta, Raama, and Sabteca. The descendants of Raamah: Seba and Dedan. ¹⁰ Cush became the father of Nimrod; he was the first to be a mighty one on the earth.

¹¹ Egypt became the father of Ludim, Anamim, Lehabim, Naphtuhim, ¹² Pathrusim, Casluhim, and Caphthorim, from whom the Philistines come.^c

¹³ Canaan became the father of Sidon his firstborn, and Heth, ¹⁴ and the Jebusites, the Amorites, the Girgashites, ¹⁵ the Hivites, the Arkites, the Sinites, ¹⁶ the Arvadites, the Zemarites, and the Hamathites.

¹⁷ The descendants of Shem: Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, Aram, Uz, Hul, Gether, and Meshech.^d ¹⁸ Arpachshad became the father of Shelah; and Shelah became the father of Eber. ¹⁹ To Eber were born two sons: the name of the one was Peleg (for in his days the earth was divided), and the name of his brother Joktan. ²⁰ Joktan became the father of Almodad, Sheleph, Hazarmaveth, Jerah, ²¹ Hadoram, Uzal, Diklah, ²² Ebal, Abimael, Sheba, ²³ Ophir, Havilah, and Jobab; all these were the descendants of Joktan.

^a Gen 10.3 *Ripath*; See Gk Vg

^b Gen 10.4 *Dodanim*; See Syr Vg

^c Heb *Casluhim*, from which the *Philistines* come, *Caphthorim*; See Am 9.7, Jer 47.4

^d *Mash* in Gen 10.23

Read 1 Chronicles 1:28–54

The Bible presumes that the people of the eastern Mediterranean region were descendants of Abraham. The genealogy lists Abraham's descendants through three women, though only Keturah, a secondary wife, is mentioned by name. Hagar was the mother of Ishmael and Sarah was the mother of Isaac. Chronicles usually refers to the immediate ancestor of the Israelite tribes as Israel rather than Jacob. The genealogy devotes a lot of attention to Edom, reflecting the contacts between the kingdoms of Judah and Edom just before and after the fall of the former.

Reflect: The relations between the peoples whom the Bible considers the descendants of Abraham were not very good. Do I build up or threaten the unity of the people of God today? Do I need to be reconciled with anyone?

Pray: The Arabs consider themselves descendants of Abraham through Ishmael and the Jews consider themselves descendants of Abraham through Isaac. Pray that there may be peace and reconciliation between these two peoples.

Act: Look for ways to be an instrument of peace and reconciliation. Make certain that your actions build up rather than tear down your family, your parish, and the community in which you live.

24 Shem, Arpachshad, Shelah; ²⁵ Eber, Peleg, Reu; ²⁶ Serug, Nahor, Terah; ²⁷ Abram, that is, Abraham.

From Abraham to Jacob

28 The sons of Abraham: Isaac and Ishmael. ²⁹ These are their genealogies: the firstborn of Ishmael, Nebaioth; and Kedar, Adbeel, Mibsam, ³⁰ Mishma, Dumah, Massa, Hadad, Tema, ³¹ Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. These are the sons of Ishmael. ³² The sons of Keturah, Abraham's concubine: she bore Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. The sons of Jokshan: Sheba and Dedan. ³³ The sons of Midian: Ephah, Epher, Hanoth, Abida, and Eldaah. All these were the descendants of Keturah.

34 Abraham became the father of Isaac. The sons of Isaac: Esau and Israel. ³⁵ The sons of Esau: Eliphaz, Reuel, Jeush, Jalam, and Korah. ³⁶ The sons of Eliphaz: Teman, Omar, Zephi, Gatam, Kenaz, Timna, and Amalek. ³⁷ The sons of Reuel: Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah.

38 The sons of Seir: Lotan, Shobal, Zibeon, Anah, Dishon, Ezer, and Dishan. ³⁹ The sons of Lotan: Hori and Homam; and Lotan's sister was Timna. ⁴⁰ The sons of Shobal: Alian, Manahath, Ebal, Shephi, and Onam. The sons of Zibeon: Aiah and Anah. ⁴¹ The sons of Anah: Dishon. The sons of Dishon: Hamran, Eshban, Ithran, and Cheran. ⁴² The sons of Ezer: Bilhan, Zaavan, and Jaakan.^a The sons of Dishan:^b Uz and Aran.

43 These are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom before any king reigned over the Israelites: Bela son of Beor, whose city was called Dinhabah. ⁴⁴ When Bela died, Jobab son of Zerah of Bozrah succeeded him. ⁴⁵ When Jobab died, Husham of the land of the Temanites succeeded him. ⁴⁶ When Husham died, Hadad son of Bedad, who defeated Midian in the country of Moab, succeeded him; and the name of his city was Avith. ⁴⁷ When Hadad died, Samlah of Masrekah succeeded him. ⁴⁸ When Samlah died, Shaul^c of Rehoboth on the Euphrates succeeded him. ⁴⁹ When Shaul^c died, Baal-hanan son of Achbor succeeded him. ⁵⁰ When Baal-hanan died, Hadad succeeded him; the name of his city was Pai, and his wife's name Mehetabel daughter of Matred, daughter of Me-zahab. ⁵¹ And Hadad died.

The clans^d of Edom were: clans^d Timna, Aliah,^e Jetheth, ⁵² Oholibamah, Elah, Pinon, ⁵³ Kenaz, Teman, Mibzar, ⁵⁴ Magdiel, and Iram; these are the clans^d of Edom.

The Sons of Israel and the Descendants of Judah

2 These are the sons of Israel: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, ² Dan, Joseph, Benjamin,

^a Or *and Akan*; See Gen 36.27

^b See 1.38: Heb *Dishon*

^c Or *Saul*

^d Or *chiefs*

^e Or *Alvah*; See Gen 36.40

Read 1 Chronicles 2:1–17

The Chronicler gives the genealogy of the tribe of Judah before that of any other tribe. This tribe managed to outlast the two Israelite kingdoms, and the story of the fate of the Judahite monarchy will occupy the attention of the Chronicler, who believed that God willed that Judah survive for the sake of David, the most illustrious member of that tribe.

Reflect: Do I look forward to the future with hope? Is my faith in God enough to support me in difficult times? Do I have the kind of confidence in God that allows me to live my Christian commitment with the assurance that the reign of God will transform this world of ours?

Pray: Pray with the assurance of being heard. Let your prayers reflect confidence in God, who wants nothing but the best for those who believe.

Act: Those who believe in the future that God has prepared for believers are ready to do all that they can to make this world a place of justice, peace, and love. They recognize that their efforts are never in vain.

Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. ³ The sons of Judah: Er, Onan, and Shelah; these three the Canaanite woman Bath-shua bore to him. Now Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the sight of the LORD, and he put him to death. ⁴ His daughter-in-law Tamar also bore him Perez and Zerah. Judah had five sons in all.

⁵ The sons of Perez: Hezron and Hamul. ⁶ The sons of Zerah: Zimri, Ethan, Heman, Calcol, and Dara,^a five in all. ⁷ The sons of Carmi: Achar, the troubler of Israel, who transgressed in the matter of the devoted thing; ⁸ and Ethan's son was Azariah.

⁹ The sons of Hezron, who were born to him: Jerahmeel, Ram, and Chelubai. ¹⁰ Ram became the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab became the father of Nahshon, prince of the sons of Judah. ¹¹ Nahshon became the father of Salma, Salma of Boaz, ¹² Boaz of Obed, Obed of Jesse. ¹³ Jesse became the father of Eliab his firstborn, Abinadab the second, Shimea the third, ¹⁴ Nethanel the fourth, Raddai the fifth, ¹⁵ Ozem the sixth, David the seventh; ¹⁶ and their sisters were Zeruiah and Abigail. The sons of Zeruiah: Abishai, Joab, and Asahel, three. ¹⁷ Abigail bore Amasa, and the father of Amasa was Jether the Ishmaelite.

¹⁸ Caleb son of Hezron had children by his wife Azubah, and by Jerioth; these were her sons: Jesher, Shobab, and Ardon. ¹⁹ When Azubah died, Caleb married Ephrath, who bore him Hur. ²⁰ Hur became the father of Uri, and Uri became the father of Bezalel.

²¹ Afterward Hezron went in to the daughter of Machir father of Gilead, whom he married when he was sixty years old; and she bore him Segub; ²² and Segub became the father of Jair, who had twenty-three towns in the land of Gilead. ²³ But Geshur and Aram took from them Havvoth-jair, Kenath and its villages, sixty towns. All these were descendants of Machir, father of Gilead. ²⁴ After the death of Hezron, in Caleb-ephrahtah, Abijah wife of Hezron bore him Ashhur, father of Tekoa.

²⁵ The sons of Jerahmeel, the firstborn of Hezron: Ram his firstborn, Bunah, Oren, Ozem, and Ahijah. ²⁶ Jerahmeel also had another wife, whose name was Atarah; she was the mother of Onam. ²⁷ The sons of Ram, the firstborn of Jerahmeel: Maaz, Jamin, and Eker. ²⁸ The sons of Onam: Shammai and Jada. The sons of Shammai: Nadab and Abishur. ²⁹ The name of Abishur's wife was Abihail, and she bore him Ahban and Molid. ³⁰ The sons of Nadab: Seled and Appaim; and Seled died childless. ³¹ The son^b of Appaim: Ishi. The son^b of Ishi: Sheshan. The son^b of Sheshan: Ahlai. ³² The sons of Jada, Shammai's brother: Jether and Jonathan; and Jether died childless. ³³ The sons of Jonathan: Peleth and Zaza. These were the descendants

^a Or Darda; Compare Syr Tg some Gk Mss; See 1 Kings 4.31

^b Heb sons

Read 1 Chronicles 2:18–55

The tribe of Judah was made up of many clans. This passage is the genealogy of the Hezron clan, which obviously held a very important position, since the text accords it significant attention. According to 1 Chronicles 5:3, Hezron was a son of Reuben. The territory of that tribe was near to that of Judah. The inclusion of the Hezronite clan here may reflect the assimilation of that clan into the tribe of Judah. The precise circumstances of the transfer of the Hezronites into Judah are not known.

Reflect: The merging or linking of parishes is very common today because of the shortage of clergy and demographic changes. Do we use such events as opportunities to recommit ourselves to parish life in new circumstances? Do we place obstacles in the way of those responsible for the restructuring of parishes?

Pray: Ask God's Spirit to empower you with the gifts necessary to make positive contributions to any restructuring of parochial life that you may experience.

Act: The merging or linking of parishes is never a simple or an easy task. Be sure to make positive contributions and take an active role in helping others see the process as a time of grace.

of Jerahmeel. ³⁴ Now Sheshan had no sons, only daughters; but Sheshan had an Egyptian slave, whose name was Jarha. ³⁵ So Sheshan gave his daughter in marriage to his slave Jarha; and she bore him Attai. ³⁶ Attai became the father of Nathan, and Nathan of Zabad. ³⁷ Zabad became the father of Ephlal, and Ephlal of Obed. ³⁸ Obed became the father of Jehu, and Jehu of Azariah. ³⁹ Azariah became the father of Helez, and Helez of Eleasah. ⁴⁰ Eleasah became the father of Sismai, and Sismai of Shallum. ⁴¹ Shallum became the father of Jekamiah, and Jekamiah of Elishama.

⁴² The sons of Caleb brother of Jerahmeel: Meshah^a his firstborn, who was father of Ziph. The sons of Mare-shah father of Hebron. ⁴³ The sons of Hebron: Korah, Tappuah, Rekem, and Shema. ⁴⁴ Shema became father of Raham, father of Jorkeam; and Rekem became the father of Shammai. ⁴⁵ The son of Shammai: Maon; and Maon was the father of Beth-zur. ⁴⁶ Ephah also, Caleb's concubine, bore Haran, Moza, and Gazez; and Haran became the father of Gazez. ⁴⁷ The sons of Jahdai: Regem, Jotham, Geshan, Pelet, Ephah, and Shaaph. ⁴⁸ Maacah, Caleb's concubine, bore Sheber and Tirhanah. ⁴⁹ She also bore Shaaph father of Madmannah, Sheva father of Machbenah and father of Gibeab; and the daughter of Caleb was Achsah. ⁵⁰ These were the descendants of Caleb.

The sons^b of Hur the firstborn of Ephrathah: Shobal father of Kiriath-jearim, ⁵¹ Salma father of Bethlehem, and Hareph father of Beth-gader. ⁵² Shobal father of Kiriath-jearim had other sons: Haroeh, half of the Menuhoth. ⁵³ And the families of Kiriath-jearim: the Ithrites, the Puthites, the Shumathites, and the Mishraites; from these came the Zorathites and the Eshtaolites. ⁵⁴ The sons of Salma: Bethlehem, the Netophathites, Atroth-beth-joab, and half of the Manahathites, the Zorites. ⁵⁵ The families also of the scribes that lived at Jabez: the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, and the Sucathites. These are the Kenites who came from Hammath, father of the house of Rechab.

Descendants of David and Solomon

3 These are the sons of David who were born to him in Hebron: the firstborn Amnon, by Ahinoam the Jezreelite; the second Daniel, by Abigail the Carmelite; ² the third Absalom, son of Maacah, daughter of King Talmai of Geshur; the fourth Adonijah, son of Haggith; ³ the fifth Shephatiah, by Abital; the sixth Ithream, by his wife Eglah; ⁴ six were born to him in Hebron, where he reigned for seven years and six months. And he reigned thirty-three years in Jerusalem. ⁵ These were born to him in Jerusalem: Shimea, Shobab, Nathan,

^a Gk reads *Mareshah*

^b Gk Vg: Heb *son*

Read 1 Chronicles 3

The Chronicler holds David in very high regard, so he gives special attention to the descendants of David. He first lists all David's children and then lists all those who succeeded David as kings of Judah. The genealogy goes on to name members of the family of David who lived after the exile. Since the last of those listed probably lived about 420 BC, the books of Chronicles must have been written sometime after 400 BC.

Reflect: The story of David's descendants is a sad one. What had begun with great promise ended tragically with the loss of the kingdom and exile. In my own life, how do I deal with tragedy? Do unhappy events threaten my relationship with God? Does my faith enable me to cope with the tragic elements in life?

Pray: Ask the Lord for the grace of perseverance. Fidelity to the values of the gospel is not always easy. With God's help, you can avoid the tragedy that befell the Davidic dynasty.

Act: Examine the quality of your commitment to Jesus. Identify areas of your life that are still a challenge as you try to live a life that is worthy of the gospel. Take positive steps to ensure that your commitment remains strong.

and Solomon, four by Bath-shua, daughter of Ammiel; ⁶ then Ibhaz, Elishama, Eliphelet, ⁷ Nogah, Nepheg, Japhia, ⁸ Elishama, Eliada, and Eliphelet, nine. ⁹ All these were David's sons, besides the sons of the concubines; and Tamar was their sister.

¹⁰ The descendants of Solomon: Rehoboam, Abijah his son, Asa his son, Jehoshaphat his son, ¹¹ Joram his son, Ahaziah his son, Joash his son, ¹² Amaziah his son, Azariah his son, Jotham his son, ¹³ Ahaz his son, Hezekiah his son, Manasseh his son, ¹⁴ Amon his son, Josiah his son. ¹⁵ The sons of Josiah: Johanan the first-born, the second Jehoiakim, the third Zedekiah, the fourth Shallum. ¹⁶ The descendants of Jehoiakim: Jeconiah his son, Zedekiah his son; ¹⁷ and the sons of Jeconiah, the captive: Shealtiel his son, ¹⁸ Malchiram, Pedaiyah, Shenazzar, Jekamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah; ¹⁹ The sons of Pedaiyah: Zerubbabel and Shimei; and the sons of Zerubbabel: Meshullam and Hananiah, and Shelomith was their sister; ²⁰ and Hashubah, Ohel, Berechiah, Hasadiah, and Jushab-hesed, five. ²¹ The sons of Hananiah: Pelatiah and Jeshaiah, his son^a Rephaiah, his son^a Arnan, his son^a Obadiah, his son^a Shecaniah. ²² The son^b of Shecaniah: Shemaiah. And the sons of Shemaiah: Hattush, Igal, Bariah, Neariah, and Shaphat, six. ²³ The sons of Neariah: Elieoenai, Hizkiah, and Azrikam, three. ²⁴ The sons of Elieoenai: Hodaviah, Eliashib, Pellaiah, Akkub, Johanan, Delaiah, and Anani, seven.

Descendants of Judah

4 The sons of Judah: Perez, Hezron, Carmi, Hur, and Shobal. ² Reaiah son of Shobal became the father of Jahath, and Jahath became the father of Ahumai and Lahad. These were the families of the Zorathites. ³ These were the sons^c of Etam: Jezreel, Ishma, and Idbash; and the name of their sister was Hazzeleponi, ⁴ and Penuel was the father of Gedor, and Ezer the father of Hushah. These were the sons of Hur, the first-born of Ephrathah, the father of Bethlehem. ⁵ Ashhur father of Tekoa had two wives, Helah and Naarah; ⁶ Naarah bore him Ahuzzam, Hopher, Temeni, and Haahashtari.^d These were the sons of Naarah. ⁷ The sons of Helah: Zereth, Izhar,^e and Ethnan. ⁸ Koz became the father of Anub, Zobeab, and the families of Aharhel son of Harum. ⁹ Jabez was honored more than his brothers; and his mother named him Jabez, saying, "Because I bore him in pain." ¹⁰ Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that you would bless me and enlarge my border, and that your hand might be with me, and that you would keep me from hurt and harm!" And God granted what he asked. ¹¹ Chelub the brother of Shuhah became the father of Mehir, who was the father of Esh-

^a Gk Compare Syr Vg: Heb *sons of*

^b Heb *sons*

^c Gk Compare Vg: Heb *the father*

^d Or *Ahashtari*

^e Another reading is *Zohar*

Read 1 Chronicles 4:1–23

Verse 10 is the “prayer of Jabez” that has become popular among evangelical Christians. It is a prayer for prosperity. Verse 17 mentions Bithiah, the “daughter of Pharaoh,” who married into the tribe of Judah. The people of ancient Israel recognized that the community was made up of people from several nations in the ancient Near East.

Reflect: Some Christians believe that material prosperity is a sign of God’s favor and an answer to prayer. Do you share this view? What is the significance of prosperity for the believer? Also, how welcoming is your Christian community to newcomers—especially those of a racial or an ethnic background that differs from that of the majority of your community?

Pray: Pray that you may use the material blessings that God has given you to build up the Christian community. Ask God for a welcoming spirit that will help you make newcomers feel at home in your parish.

Act: Take the time to carefully consider how you can use the material blessings in your life to help others. How much can you share with the poor? Select a charity to support regularly and generously. Volunteer in your parish to help new parishioners feel at home in your Christian community.

ton.¹² Eshton became the father of Beth-rapha, Paseah, and Tehinnah the father of Ir-nahash. These are the men of Recah.¹³ The sons of Kenaz: Othniel and Seraiah; and the sons of Othniel: Hathath and Meonothai.^a ¹⁴ Meonothai became the father of Ophrah; and Seraiah became the father of Joab father of Ge-harashim,^b so-called because they were artisans.¹⁵ The sons of Caleb son of Jephunneh: Iru, Elah, and Naam; and the sons^c of Elah: Kenaz.¹⁶ The sons of Jehallelel: Ziph, Ziphah, Tiria, and Asarel.¹⁷ The sons of Ezrah: Jether, Mered, Ephraim, and Jalon. These are the sons of Bithiah, daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered married;^d and she conceived and bore^e Miriam, Shammai, and Ishbah father of Eshtemoa.¹⁸ And his Judean wife bore Jered father of Gedor, Heber father of Soco, and Jekuthiel father of Zanoah.¹⁹ The sons of the wife of Hodiah, the sister of Naham, were the fathers of Keilah the Garmite and Eshtemoa the Maacathite.²⁰ The sons of Shimon: Amnon, Rinnah, Ben-hanan, and Tilon. The sons of Ishi: Zoheth and Ben-zoheth.²¹ The sons of Shelah son of Judah: Er father of Lecah, Laadah father of Mareshah, and the families of the guild of linen workers at Beth-ashbea;²² and Jokim, and the men of Cozeba, and Joash, and Saraph, who married into Moab but returned to Lehem^f (now the records^g are ancient).²³ These were the potters and inhabitants of Netaim and Gederah; they lived there with the king in his service.

Descendants of Simeon

²⁴ The sons of Simeon: Nemuel, Jamin, Jarib, Zerah, Shaul;^h ²⁵ Shallum was his son, Mibsam his son, Mishma his son.²⁶ The sons of Mishma: Hammuel his son, Zaccur his son, Shimei his son.²⁷ Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters; but his brothers did not have many children, nor did all their family multiply like the Judeans.²⁸ They lived in Beer-sheba, Moladah, Hazar-shual,²⁹ Bilhah, Ezem, Tolad,³⁰ Bethuel, Hormah, Ziklag,³¹ Beth-marcaboth, Hazar-susim, Bethbiri, and Shaaraim. These were their towns until David became king.³² And their villages were Etam, Ain, Rimmon, Tochen, and Ashan, five towns,³³ along with all their villages that were around these towns as far as Baal. These were their settlements. And they kept a genealogical record.

³⁴ Meshobab, Jamlech, Joshah son of Amaziah,³⁵ Joel, Jehu son of Joshibiah son of Seraiah son of Asiel,³⁶ Elioenai, Jaakobah, Jeshohaiah, Asaiah, Adiel, Jesimiel, Benaiah,³⁷ Ziza son of Shiphi son of Allon son of Jedaiah son of Shimri son of Shemaiah—³⁸ these mentioned by name were leaders in their families, and their clans increased greatly.³⁹ They journeyed to the

^a Gk Vg: Heb lacks *and Meonothai*

^b That is *Valley of artisans*

^c Heb sons

^d The clause: *These are ... married* is transposed from verse 18

^e Heb lacks *and bore*

^f Vg Compare Gk: Heb *and Jashubi-lahem*

^g Or *matters*

^h Or *Saul*

Read 1 Chronicles 4:24–43

The territory of the tribe of Simeon was the southernmost of all Israelite territories. It abutted areas controlled by peoples who were rivals for the control of the region. The tribe of Simeon was also not as numerous as the tribe of Judah with which it shared the southern part of Israel. Eventually, Simeon was absorbed by the larger tribe of Judah.

Reflect: In a pluralistic society such as the United States, how ought Christians to conduct themselves? While the majority of people in the United States claim to be Christians, this country is home to Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus and adherents of other religions. What should be our attitude toward our fellow citizens who hold religious beliefs that differ from our own?

Pray: Breaking down barriers of religious misunderstanding ought to be a goal of your prayer. Ask God for the grace to be open to all people who are looking for an experience of God in their lives.

Act: Find opportunities to pray with other believers. Pope John Paul II twice invited leaders of the world religions to join him in Assisi to pray for peace. We should be ready to follow his example and join with all people of good will in praying for peace.

Read 1 Chronicles 5:1–10

The territory of the tribe of Reuben was east of the Jordan River. Verse 6 notes that Beerah, a leader of the Reubenites, was taken into exile by Tiglath-pilneser, the Assyrian emperor whose expansionist policies in the region eventually led to the end of the kingdom of Israel. Verse 1 refers to Reuben's affair with Bilhah, one of his father's concubines (see Gen 35:22). This, of course, was a most grave offense to his father's honor.

entrance of Gedor, to the east side of the valley, to seek pasture for their flocks, ⁴⁰ where they found rich, good pasture, and the land was very broad, quiet, and peaceful; for the former inhabitants there belonged to Ham. ⁴¹ These, registered by name, came in the days of King Hezekiah of Judah, and attacked their tents and the Meunim who were found there, and exterminated them to this day, and settled in their place, because there was pasture there for their flocks. ⁴² And some of them, five hundred men of the Simeonites, went to Mount Seir, having as their leaders Pelatiah, Neariah, Rephaiah, and Uzziel, sons of Ishi; ⁴³ they destroyed the remnant of the Amalekites that had escaped, and they have lived there to this day.

Descendants of Reuben

5 The sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel. (He was the firstborn, but because he defiled his father's bed his birthright was given to the sons of Joseph son of Israel, so that he is not enrolled in the genealogy according to the birthright; ² though Judah became prominent among his brothers and a ruler came from him, yet the birthright belonged to Joseph.) ³ The sons of Reuben, the firstborn of Israel: Hanoch, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi. ⁴ The sons of Joel: Shemaiah his son, Gog his son, Shimei his son, ⁵ Micah his son, Reaiah his son, Baal his son, ⁶ Beerah his son, whom King Tilgath-pilneser of Assyria carried away into exile; he was a chieftain of the Reubenites. ⁷ And his kindred by their families, when the genealogy of their generations was reckoned: the chief, Jeiel, and Zechariah, ⁸ and Bela son of Azaz, son of Shema, son of Joel, who lived in Aroer, as far as Nebo and Baal-meon. ⁹ He also lived to the east as far as the beginning of the desert this side of the Euphrates, because their cattle had multiplied in the land of Gilead. ¹⁰ And in the days of Saul they made war on the Hagarites, who fell by their hand; and they lived in their tents throughout all the region east of Gilead.

Descendants of Gad

11 The sons of Gad lived beside them in the land of Bashan as far as Salecah: ¹² Joel the chief, Shapham the second, Janai, and Shaphat in Bashan. ¹³ And their kindred according to their clans: Michael, Meshullam, Sheba, Jorai, Jacan, Zia, and Eber, seven. ¹⁴ These were the sons of Abihail son of Huri, son of Jaroah, son of Gilead, son of Michael, son of Jeshishai, son of Jahdo, son of Buz; ¹⁵ Ahi son of Abdiel, son of Guni, was chief in their clan; ¹⁶ and they lived in Gilead, in Bashan and in its towns, and in all the pasture lands of Sharon to their limits. ¹⁷ All of these were enrolled by genealo-

Reflect: Though Reuben was the firstborn of Jacob's sons, he forfeited the rights that came with this position because he acted without regard for his father's honor. Consider how you may contribute to your community's and your family's welfare and how your actions can dishonor them.

Pray: The church's reputation has been severely hurt by the actions of the clergy in recent years. Pray that those who serve the church may do so with honor and integrity.

Act: Look for ways in which you can restore the church's reputation in the public sphere. Join those who are making positive contributions to public life as Catholics.

Read 1 Chronicles 5:11–26

The territories of the tribe of Gad and half of the tribe of Manasseh were located east of the Jordan River. The pasture lands in Bashan where the Gadites dwelt were particularly fertile. The territories of these tribes were in the far north of Israel and were among the first to fall to the Assyrians in the eighth century BC.

Reflect: The Israelite tribes regarded their land as a gift of God. The fertile pastures of Bashan made it possible for Gad and Manasseh to prosper. Consider the gifts that you have received from God that make your life worth living.

Pray: Thank God for the material prosperity that you enjoy, remembering that all that we have is a gift of God.

Act: Share with your sisters and brothers in need the gifts that you have received. Look for the opportunities God has given you to be a blessing in the lives of poor people.

gies in the days of King Jotham of Judah, and in the days of King Jeroboam of Israel.

18 The Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh had valiant warriors, who carried shield and sword, and drew the bow, expert in war, forty-four thousand seven hundred sixty, ready for service. 19 They made war on the Hagrites, Jetur, Naphish, and Nodab; 20 and when they received help against them, the Hagrites and all who were with them were given into their hands, for they cried to God in the battle, and he granted their entreaty because they trusted in him. 21 They captured their livestock: fifty thousand of their camels, two hundred fifty thousand sheep, two thousand donkeys, and one hundred thousand captives. 22 Many fell slain, because the war was of God. And they lived in their territory until the exile.

The Half-Tribe of Manasseh

23 The members of the half-tribe of Manasseh lived in the land; they were very numerous from Bashan to Baal-hermon, Senir, and Mount Hermon. 24 These were the heads of their clans: Ephraim,^a Ishi, Eliel, Azriel, Jeremiah, Hodaviah, and Jahdiel, mighty warriors, famous men, heads of their clans. 25 But they transgressed against the God of their ancestors, and prostituted themselves to the gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them. 26 So the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of King Pul of Assyria, the spirit of King Tilgath-pilneser of Assyria, and he carried them away, namely, the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and brought them to Halah, Habor, Hara, and the river Gozan, to this day.

Descendants of Levi

6^b The sons of Levi: Gershom,^c Kohath, and Merari. ² The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. ³ The children of Amram: Aaron, Moses, and Miriam. The sons of Aaron: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. ⁴ Eleazar became the father of Phinehas, Phinehas of Abishua, ⁵ Abishua of Bukki, Bukki of Uzzi, ⁶ Uzzi of Zerariah, Zerariah of Meraioth, ⁷ Meraioth of Amariah, Amariah of Ahitub, ⁸ Ahitub of Zadok, Zadok of Ahimaaz, ⁹ Ahimaaz of Azariah, Azariah of Johanan, ¹⁰ and Johanan of Azariah (it was he who served as priest in the house that Solomon built in Jerusalem). ¹¹ Azariah became the father of Amariah, Amariah of Ahitub, ¹² Ahitub of Zadok, Zadok of Shallum, ¹³ Shallum of Hilkiah, Hilkiah of Azariah, ¹⁴ Azariah of Seraiah, Seraiah of Jehozadak; ¹⁵ and Jehozadak went into exile when the LORD sent Judah and Jerusalem into exile by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

^a Gk Vg: Heb and Ephraim

^b Ch 5.27 in Heb

^c Heb *Gershon*, variant of *Gershom*; See 6.16

Read 1 Chronicles 6

Genealogies were especially important for ancient Israel's liturgical personnel, since their positions were hereditary. By the time the books of Chronicles were written, all priests had to be members of the tribe of Levi. This genealogy of this tribe focuses on Levi's son Korah, from whom the priests and the principal singers of the Jerusalem temple descended. Verses 54–81 list the cities and pastures assigned to the Levites from the territories of the other tribes. The tribe of Levi had no assigned territory as did the other tribes.

Reflect: The priesthood in the religion of ancient Israel was hereditary, while that of the church is not. In Europe and North America, the number of priests has declined precipitously in the last forty years. What are the reasons for this decline? How can this trend be reversed? How have permanent deacons and lay ecclesial ministers provided for the pastoral care of the Christian faithful?

Pray: Pray daily for vocations to the priesthood. Pray too for permanent deacons and lay ecclesial ministers, who also have a vocation to ministry.

Act: Encourage young people to consider full-time ministry as a way to live out their Christian lives. Speak positively about how priests, permanent deacons, and lay ecclesial ministers all contribute to the care of souls.

16^a The sons of Levi: Gershom, Kohath, and Merari. 17 These are the names of the sons of Gershom: Libni and Shimei. 18 The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel. 19 The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. These are the clans of the Levites according to their ancestry. 20 Of Gershom: Libni his son, Jahath his son, Zimmah his son, 21 Joah his son, Iddo his son, Zerah his son, Jeatherai his son. 22 The sons of Kohath: Amminadab his son, Korah his son, Assir his son, 23 Elkanah his son, Ebiasaph his son, Assir his son, 24 Tahath his son, Uriel his son, Uzziab his son, and Shaul his son. 25 The sons of Elkanah: Amasai and Ahimoth, 26 Elkanah his son, Zophai his son, Nahath his son, 27 Eliab his son, Jeroham his son, Elkanah his son. 28 The sons of Samuel: Joel^b his firstborn, the second Abijah.^c 29 The sons of Merari: Mahli, Libni his son, Shimei his son, Uzah his son, 30 Shimea his son, Haggiah his son, and Asaiah his son.

Musicians Appointed by David

31 These are the men whom David put in charge of the service of song in the house of the LORD, after the ark came to rest there. 32 They ministered with song before the tabernacle of the tent of meeting, until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem; and they performed their service in due order. 33 These are the men who served; and their sons were: Of the Kohathites: Heman, the singer, son of Joel, son of Samuel, 34 son of Elkanah, son of Jeroham, son of Eliel, son of Toah, 35 son of Zuph, son of Elkanah, son of Mahath, son of Amasai, 36 son of Elkanah, son of Joel, son of Azariah, son of Zephaniah, 37 son of Tahath, son of Assir, son of Ebiasaph, son of Korah, 38 son of Izhar, son of Kohath, son of Levi, son of Israel; 39 and his brother Asaph, who stood on his right, namely, Asaph son of Berechiah, son of Shimea, 40 son of Michael, son of Baaseiah, son of Malchijah, 41 son of Ethni, son of Zerah, son of Adaiah, 42 son of Ethan, son of Zimmah, son of Shimei, 43 son of Jahath, son of Gershom, son of Levi. 44 On the left were their kindred the sons of Merari: Ethan son of Kishi, son of Abdi, son of Malluch, 45 son of Hashabiah, son of Amaziah, son of Hilkiah, 46 son of Amzi, son of Bani, son of Shemer, 47 son of Mahli, son of Mushi, son of Merari, son of Levi; 48 and their kindred the Levites were appointed for all the service of the tabernacle of the house of God.

49 But Aaron and his sons made offerings on the altar of burnt offering and on the altar of incense, doing all the work of the most holy place, to make atonement for Israel, according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded. 50 These are the sons of Aaron: Elea-

^a Ch 6.1 in Heb

^b Gk Syr Compare verse 33 and 1 Sam 8.2: Heb lacks Joel

^c Heb reads *Vashni*, and *Abijah* for the second *Abijah*, taking the second as a proper name

zar his son, Phinehas his son, Abishua his son, ⁵¹ Bukki his son, Uzzi his son, Zerahiah his son, ⁵² Meraioth his son, Amariah his son, Ahitub his son, ⁵³ Zadok his son, Ahimaaz his son.

Settlements of the Levites

⁵⁴ These are their dwelling places according to their settlements within their borders: to the sons of Aaron of the families of Kohathites—for the lot fell to them first—⁵⁵ to them they gave Hebron in the land of Judah and its surrounding pasture lands, ⁵⁶ but the fields of the city and its villages they gave to Caleb son of Jephunneh. ⁵⁷ To the sons of Aaron they gave the cities of refuge: Hebron, Libnah with its pasture lands, Jattir, Eshtemoa with its pasture lands, ⁵⁸ Hilen^a with its pasture lands, Debir with its pasture lands, ⁵⁹ Ashan with its pasture lands, and Beth-shemesh with its pasture lands. ⁶⁰ From the tribe of Benjamin, Geba with its pasture lands, Alemeth with its pasture lands, and Anathoth with its pasture lands. All their towns throughout their families were thirteen.

⁶¹ To the rest of the Kohathites were given by lot out of the family of the tribe, out of the half-tribe, the half of Manasseh, ten towns. ⁶² To the Gershomites according to their families were allotted thirteen towns out of the tribes of Issachar, Asher, Naphtali, and Manasseh in Bashan. ⁶³ To the Merarites according to their families were allotted twelve towns out of the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Zebulun. ⁶⁴ So the people of Israel gave the Levites the towns with their pasture lands. ⁶⁵ They also gave them by lot out of the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and Benjamin these towns that are mentioned by name.

⁶⁶ And some of the families of the sons of Kohath had towns of their territory out of the tribe of Ephraim. ⁶⁷ They were given the cities of refuge: Shechem with its pasture lands in the hill country of Ephraim, Gezer with its pasture lands, ⁶⁸ Jokmeam with its pasture lands, Beth-horon with its pasture lands, ⁶⁹ Aijalon with its pasture lands, Gath-rimmon with its pasture lands; ⁷⁰ and out of the half-tribe of Manasseh, Aner with its pasture lands, and Bileam with its pasture lands, for the rest of the families of the Kohathites.

⁷¹ To the Gershomites: out of the half-tribe of Manasseh: Golan in Bashan with its pasture lands and Ashtaroth with its pasture lands; ⁷² and out of the tribe of Issachar: Kedesh with its pasture lands, Daberath^b with its pasture lands, ⁷³ Ramoth with its pasture lands, and Anem with its pasture lands; ⁷⁴ out of the tribe of Asher: Mashal with its pasture lands, Abdon with its pasture lands, ⁷⁵ Hukok with its pasture lands, and Rehob with its pasture lands; ⁷⁶ and out of the tribe of

^a Other readings *Hilez, Holon*; See Josh 21.15

^b Or *Dobrath*

Naphtali: Kedesh in Galilee with its pasture lands, Hammon with its pasture lands, and Kiriathaim with its pasture lands. ⁷⁷ To the rest of the Merarites out of the tribe of Zebulun: Rimmono with its pasture lands, Tabor with its pasture lands, ⁷⁸ and across the Jordan from Jericho, on the east side of the Jordan, out of the tribe of Reuben: Bezer in

the steppe with its pasture lands, Jahzah with its pasture lands, ⁷⁹ Kedemoth with its pasture lands, and Mephaath with its pasture lands; ⁸⁰ and out of the tribe of Gad: Ramoth in Gilead with its pasture lands, Mahanaim with its pasture lands, ⁸¹ Heshbon with its pasture lands, and Jazer with its pasture lands.

Read 1 Chronicles 7

This is the genealogy of the remaining tribes whose territory was west of the Jordan River. The most important of these tribes were Ephraim and Manasseh, named after the two sons of Joseph. Their inclusion among the tribes named after the sons of Jacob brings the number of tribes that received specific territory to twelve. The tribe of Levi received no territory, since its people were to derive their support from the liturgical service they were to provide.

Reflect: The genealogies serve to set the scene for the emergence of David, with whom the story of Israel properly begins—according to the Chronicler. In a similar fashion, the Gospel of Matthew prefaces the story of Jesus with a genealogy that begins with Abraham and ends with Joseph. Both the Chronicler and Matthew identify legitimacy with continuity. What role do religious traditions play in your life with God?

Pray: The Roman Canon has us pray for “all who hold and teach the Catholic faith that comes to us from the apostles.” The continuity of faith over the centuries is an important part of the Catholic experience. We ought to pray that we can hand on the faith that we have received.

Act: Become a catechist and help pass on the faith to the next generation. Hand on what you have received.

Descendants of Issachar

7 The sons^a of Issachar: Tola, Puah, Jashub, and Shimron, four. ² The sons of Tola: Uzzi, Rephaiah, Jeriel, Jahmai, Ibsam, and Shemuel, heads of their ancestral houses, namely of Tola, mighty warriors of their generations, their number in the days of David being twenty-two thousand six hundred. ³ The son^b of Uzzi: Izrahiah. And the sons of Izrahiah: Michael, Obadiah, Joel, and Isshiah, five, all of them chiefs; ⁴ and along with them, by their generations, according to their ancestral houses, were units of the fighting force, thirty-six thousand, for they had many wives and sons. ⁵ Their kindred belonging to all the families of Issachar were in all eighty-seven thousand mighty warriors, enrolled by genealogy.

Descendants of Benjamin

6 The sons of Benjamin: Bela, Becher, and Jediael, three. ⁷ The sons of Bela: Ezbon, Uzzi, Uzziel, Jerimoth, and Iri, five, heads of ancestral houses, mighty warriors; and their enrollment by genealogies was twenty-two thousand thirty-four. ⁸ The sons of Becher: Zemirah, Joash, Eliezer, Elioenai, Omri, Jeremoth, Abijah, Anathoth, and Alemeth. All these were the sons of Becher; ⁹ and their enrollment by genealogies, according to their generations, as heads of their ancestral houses, mighty warriors, was twenty thousand two hundred. ¹⁰ The sons of Jediael: Bilhan. And the sons of Bilhan: Jeush, Benjamin, Ehud, Chenaanah, Zethan, Tarshish, and Ahishahar. ¹¹ All these were the sons of Jediael according to the heads of their ancestral houses, mighty warriors, seventeen thousand two hundred, ready for service in war. ¹² And Shuppim and Huppim were the sons of Ir, Hushim the son^b of Aher.

Descendants of Naphtali

13 The descendants of Naphtali: Jahziel, Guni, Jazer, and Shallum, the descendants of Bilhah.

Descendants of Manasseh

14 The sons of Manasseh: Asriel, whom his Aramean concubine bore; she bore Machir the father of

^a Syr Compare Vg: Heb *And to the sons*

^b Heb *sons*

Gilead. ¹⁵ And Machir took a wife for Huppim and for Shuppim. The name of his sister was Maacah. And the name of the second was Zelophehad; and Zelophehad had daughters. ¹⁶ Maacah the wife of Machir bore a son, and she named him Peresh; the name of his brother was Sheresh; and his sons were Ulam and Rekem. ¹⁷ The son^a of Ulam: Bedan. These were the sons of Gilead son of Machir, son of Manasseh. ¹⁸ And his sister Hammolecheth bore Ishhod, Abiezer, and Mahlah. ¹⁹ The sons of Shemida were Ahian, Shechem, Likhi, and Aniam.

Descendants of Ephraim

20 The sons of Ephraim: Shuthelah, and Bered his son, Tahath his son, Eleadah his son, Tahath his son, ²¹ Zabad his son, Shuthelah his son, and Ezer and Elead. Now the people of Gath, who were born in the land, killed them, because they came down to raid their cattle. ²² And their father Ephraim mourned many days, and his brothers came to comfort him. ²³ Ephraim^b went in to his wife, and she conceived and bore a son; and he named him Beriah, because disaster^c had befallen his house. ²⁴ His daughter was Sheerah, who built both Lower and Upper Beth-horon, and Uzzen-sheerah. ²⁵ Rephah was his son, Resheph his son, Telah his son, Tahan his son, ²⁶ Ladan his son, Ammihud his son, Elishama his son, ²⁷ Nun^d his son, Joshua his son. ²⁸ Their possessions and settlements were Bethel and its towns, and eastward Naaran, and westward Gezer and its towns, Shechem and its towns, as far as Ayyah and its towns; ²⁹ also along the borders of the Manassites, Beth-shean and its towns, Taanach and its towns, Megiddo and its towns, Dor and its towns. In these lived the sons of Joseph son of Israel.

Descendants of Asher

30 The sons of Asher: Imnah, Ishvah, Ishvi, Beriah, and their sister Serah. ³¹ The sons of Beriah: Heber and Malchiel, who was the father of Birzaith. ³² Heber became the father of Japhlet, Shomer, Hotham, and their sister Shua. ³³ The sons of Japhlet: Pasach, Bimhal, and Ashvath. These are the sons of Japhlet. ³⁴ The sons of Shemer: Ahi, Rohgah, Hubbah, and Aram. ³⁵ The sons of Helem^e his brother: Zophah, Imna, Shelesh, and Amal. ³⁶ The sons of Zophah: Suah, Harnepher, Shual, Beri, Imrah, ³⁷ Bezer, Hod, Shamma, Shilshah, Ithran, and Beera. ³⁸ The sons of Jether: Jephunneh, Pispa, and Ara. ³⁹ The sons of Ulla: Arah, Hanniel, and Rizia. ⁴⁰ All of these were men of Asher, heads of ancestral houses, select mighty warriors, chief of the princes. Their number enrolled by genealogies, for service in war, was twenty-six thousand men.

^a Heb sons

^b Heb He

^c Heb *beraah*

^d Here spelled *Non*; see Ex 33.11

^e Or *Hotham*; see 7.32

Read 1 Chronicles 8:1—9:1a

This is a variant of the genealogy of Benjamin given in 1 Chronicles 7:6–12. Here the genealogy focuses on Saul and his descendants. The Chronicler does not give the title “king” to Saul, reserving that for David and his descendants. Still, the prominence given to Saul’s family in this genealogy of Benjamin attests to the crucial role he played in Israel’s life from the Chronicler’s perspective.

Reflect: The territory of Benjamin was relatively small and was sandwiched between the much larger territories of much more important tribes: Ephraim to the north and Judah to the south. Still, the tribe of Benjamin produced Saul, who was the first to unite the disparate tribes of Israel under his rule. How often do we neglect to take actions because we think that our efforts cannot change society? Saul was not deterred by the apparent insignificance of his background.

Pray: Remember to prayerfully support the individuals and groups that are trying to have a positive effect on church and society. Pray for the new efforts being made to deal with the challenges of contemporary life.

Act: Offer your support to individuals who are beginning their service to church and society. Stand with them and help them fulfill the task entrusted to them.

Descendants of Benjamin

8 Benjamin became the father of Bela his firstborn, Ashbel the second, Aharah the third, ² Nohah the fourth, and Rapha the fifth. ³ And Bela had sons: Addar, Gera, Abihud,^a ⁴ Abishua, Naaman, Ahoah, ⁵ Gera, Shephuphan, and Huram. ⁶ These are the sons of Ehud (they were heads of ancestral houses of the inhabitants of Geba, and they were carried into exile to Manahath): ⁷ Naaman,^b Ahijah, and Gera, that is, Heglam,^c who became the father of Uzza and Ahihud. ⁸ And Shaharaim had sons in the country of Moab after he had sent away his wives Hushim and Baara. ⁹ He had sons by his wife Hodesh: Jobab, Zibia, Mesha, Malcam, ¹⁰ Jeuz, Sachia, and Mirmah. These were his sons, heads of ancestral houses. ¹¹ He also had sons by Hushim: Abitub and Elpaal. ¹² The sons of Elpaal: Eber, Misham, and Shemed, who built Ono and Lod with its towns, ¹³ and Beriah and Shema (they were heads of ancestral houses of the inhabitants of Aijalon, who put to flight the inhabitants of Gath); ¹⁴ and Ahio, Shashak, and Jeremoth. ¹⁵ Zebadiah, Arad, Eder, ¹⁶ Michael, Ishpah, and Joha were sons of Beriah. ¹⁷ Zebadiah, Meshullam, Hizki, Heber, ¹⁸ Ishmerai, Izliah, and Jobab were the sons of Elpaal. ¹⁹ Jakim, Zichri, Zabdi, ²⁰ Elienai, Zillethai, Eliel, ²¹ Adaiah, Beraiah, and Shimrath were the sons of Shimei. ²² Ishpan, Eber, Eliel, ²³ Abdon, Zichri, Hanan, ²⁴ Hananiah, Elam, Anthothijah, ²⁵ Iphdeiah, and Penuel were the sons of Shashak. ²⁶ Shamsherai, Shehariah, Athaliah, ²⁷ Jareshiah, Elijah, and Zichri were the sons of Jeroham. ²⁸ These were the heads of ancestral houses, according to their generations, chiefs. These lived in Jerusalem.

²⁹ Jeiel^d the father of Gibeon lived in Gibeon, and the name of his wife was Maacah. ³⁰ His firstborn son: Abdon, then Zur, Kish, Baal,^e Nadab, ³¹ Gedor, Ahio, Zecher, ³² and Mikloth, who became the father of Shimeah. Now these also lived opposite their kindred in Jerusalem, with their kindred. ³³ Ner became the father of Kish, Kish of Saul,^f Saul^f of Jonathan, Malchishua, Abinadab, and Esh-baal; ³⁴ and the son of Jonathan was Merib-baal; and Merib-baal became the father of Micah. ³⁵ The sons of Micah: Pithon, Melech, Tarea, and Ahaz. ³⁶ Ahaz became the father of Jehoaddah; and Jehoaddah became the father of Alemeth, Azmaveth, and Zimri; Zimri became the father of Moza. ³⁷ Moza became the father of Binea; Raphah was his son, Eleasah his son, Azel his son. ³⁸ Azel had six sons, and these are their names: Azrikam, Bocheru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadiah, and Hanan; all these were the sons of Azel. ³⁹ The sons of his brother Eshek: Ulam his firstborn, Jeush the second, and Eliphelet the third. ⁴⁰ The sons

^a Or father of Ehud; see 8.6

^b Heb and Naaman

^c Or he carried them into exile

^d Compare 9.35: Heb lacks Jeiel

^e Gk Ms adds Ner; Compare 8.33 and 9.36

^f Or Shaul

of Ulam were mighty warriors, archers, one hundred fifty. All these were Benjaminites, having many children and grandchildren,

Read 1 Chronicles 9:1b–9

After listing the ancestors of the Israelites according to the genealogies available to him, the Chronicler telescopes his perspective to the period immediately following the return of the exiles from Babylon in the sixth century B.C. At that time, the territory to which the exiles returned was the city of Jerusalem and about thirty miles surrounding it. He notes that individuals from several tribes took up residence in Jerusalem.

Reflect: The contrast between the extent of Israelite territory assumed in chapters 1–8 to that in chapter 9 could not be greater. The fortunes of the people of Israel had changed dramatically. Consider dramatic changes that have occurred in your own life. How have you coped with these changes? What kind of accommodations have you had to make in view of your new circumstances?

Pray: Religious institutes in the church—especially in Europe and North America—have had to deal with diminishment in numbers and the aging of those who remain in religious life. Pray for vocations to religious life and for the elderly and infirm religious who have faithfully served the people of God.

Act: Visit or write to a religious priest, brother, or sister who has been a positive influence in your life. Tell them how you are doing and what their ministry has meant to you.

9 So all Israel was enrolled by genealogies; and these are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel. And Judah was taken into exile in Babylon because of their unfaithfulness. ² Now the first to live again in their possessions in their towns were Israelites, priests, Levites, and temple servants.

Inhabitants of Jerusalem after the Exile

3 And some of the people of Judah, Benjamin, Ephraim, and Manasseh lived in Jerusalem: ⁴ Uthai son of Ammihud, son of Omri, son of Imri, son of Bani, from the sons of Perez son of Judah. ⁵ And of the Shilonites: Asaiah the firstborn, and his sons. ⁶ Of the sons of Zerah: Jeuel and their kin, six hundred ninety. ⁷ Of the Benjaminites: Sallu son of Meshullam, son of Hodaviah, son of Hassenuah, ⁸ Ibneiah son of Jeroham, Elah son of Uzzi, son of Michri, and Meshullam son of Shephatiah, son of Reuel, son of Ibnijah; ⁹ and their kindred according to their generations, nine hundred fifty-six. All these were heads of families according to their ancestral houses.

Priestly Families

10 Of the priests: Jedaiah, Jehoiarib, Jachin, ¹¹ and Azariah son of Hilkiah, son of Meshullam, son of Zadok, son of Meraioth, son of Ahitub, the chief officer of the house of God; ¹² and Adaiah son of Jeroham, son of Pashhur, son of Malchijah, and Maasai son of Adiel, son of Jahzerah, son of Meshullam, son of Meshillemith, son of Immer; ¹³ besides their kindred, heads of their ancestral houses, one thousand seven hundred sixty, qualified for the work of the service of the house of God.

Levitical Families

14 Of the Levites: Shemaiah son of Hasshub, son of Azrikam, son of Hashabiah, of the sons of Merari; ¹⁵ and Bakbakkar, Heresh, Galal, and Mattaniah son of Mica, son of Zichri, son of Asaph; ¹⁶ and Obadiah son of Shemaiah, son of Galal, son of Jeduthun, and Berechiah son of Asa, son of Elkanah, who lived in the villages of the Netophathites.

17 The gatekeepers were: Shallum, Akkub, Talmon, Ahiman; and their kindred Shallum was the chief, ¹⁸ stationed previously in the king's gate on the east side. These were the gatekeepers of the camp of the Levites. ¹⁹ Shallum son of Kore, son of Ebiasaph, son of Korah, and his kindred of his ancestral house, the Ko-

Read 1 Chronicles 9:10–34

The Chronicler envisions a two-tiered organization of liturgical personnel. In verses 10–13, he speaks of the priests. They are responsible for the service of the house of God and their duties include the offering of sacrifice. The Chronicler, however, devotes most of his attention to the lower tier of the temple's liturgical personnel: the Levites who perform a variety of tasks necessary for good order in the temple.

Reflect: In addition to the priest, many people, exercising a variety of responsibilities, are necessary for the liturgy. Among these are deacons, readers, acolytes, extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist, musicians, sacristans, ushers, and greeters. What is the quality of their service in your parish? Do you exercise any type of service for your fellow worshippers? Are you willing to make your contribution to your parish's Sunday worship?

Pray: If you do exercise a liturgical ministry in your parish, pray that you may offer your service with integrity, skill, and commitment. If you are not a liturgical minister, consider offering your services.

Act: Attend a parish or diocesan workshop on liturgical ministries. Be prepared to make a positive contribution that will enhance the quality of your parish's Sunday worship.

rahites, were in charge of the work of the service, guardians of the thresholds of the tent, as their ancestors had been in charge of the camp of the LORD, guardians of the entrance. ²⁰ And Phinehas son of Eleazar was chief over them in former times; the LORD was with him. ²¹ Zechariah son of Meshelemiah was gatekeeper at the entrance of the tent of meeting. ²² All these, who were chosen as gatekeepers at the thresholds, were two hundred twelve. They were enrolled by genealogies in their villages. David and the seer Samuel established them in their office of trust. ²³ So they and their descendants were in charge of the gates of the house of the LORD, that is, the house of the tent, as guards. ²⁴ The gatekeepers were on the four sides, east, west, north, and south; ²⁵ and their kindred who were in their villages were obliged to come in every seven days, in turn, to be with them; ²⁶ for the four chief gatekeepers, who were Levites, were in charge of the chambers and the treasures of the house of God. ²⁷ And they would spend the night near the house of God; for on them lay the duty of watching, and they had charge of opening it every morning.

²⁸ Some of them had charge of the utensils of service, for they were required to count them when they were brought in and taken out. ²⁹ Others of them were appointed over the furniture, and over all the holy utensils, also over the choice flour, the wine, the oil, the incense, and the spices. ³⁰ Others, of the sons of the priests, prepared the mixing of the spices, ³¹ and Mattithiah, one of the Levites, the firstborn of Shallum the Korahite, was in charge of making the flat cakes. ³² Also some of their kindred of the Kohathites had charge of the rows of bread, to prepare them for each sabbath.

³³ Now these are the singers, the heads of ancestral houses of the Levites, living in the chambers of the temple free from other service, for they were on duty day and night. ³⁴ These were heads of ancestral houses of the Levites, according to their generations; these leaders lived in Jerusalem.

The Family of King Saul

³⁵ In Gibeon lived the father of Gibeon, Jeiel, and the name of his wife was Maacah. ³⁶ His firstborn son was Abdon, then Zur, Kish, Baal, Ner, Nadab, ³⁷ Gedor, Ahio, Zechariah, and Mikloth; ³⁸ and Mikloth became the father of Shimeam; and these also lived opposite their kindred in Jerusalem, with their kindred. ³⁹ Ner became the father of Kish, Kish of Saul, Saul of Jonathan, Malchishua, Abinadab, and Esh-baal; ⁴⁰ and the son of Jonathan was Merib-baal; and Merib-baal became the father of Micah. ⁴¹ The sons of Micah: Pithon, Melech,

Tahrea, and Ahaz;^a 42 and Ahaz became the father of Jarah, and Jarah of Alemeth, Azmaveth, and Zimri; and Zimri became the father of Moza. 43 Moza became the father of Binea; and Rephaiah was his son,

Eleasah his son, Azel his son. 44 Azel had six sons, and these are their names: Azrikam, Bocheru, Ishmael, Sheariah, Obadi-ah, and Hanan; these were the sons of Azel.

Read 1 Chronicles 9:35—10:14

The Chronicler's interest is focused primarily on the Davidic dynasty. Still, he cannot ignore Saul, who was the first king of Israel. The Chronicler provides a genealogy of Saul's family, the story of his tragic end, and a theological explanation for it. Saul's rebellion against the Lord is the justification for the transference of the kingdom to David.

Reflect: The biblical tradition shows that there is a connection between sin and the evil that people experience in their lives. Sin unleashes the power of evil—a power that can do more than just destroy the guilty; it can entrap the innocent as well. Saul's sin led not only to his downfall but also to the death of his children and the end of his dynasty.

Pray: In the Lord's Prayer, we pray for the defeat of the powers of evil and the coming of God's kingdom. We pray that God's will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Act: Believers are not powerless before the power of evil. Through acts of kindness and generosity we can undo the damage we cause to others and to ourselves by sin. Look for what you can do in a positive way to repair the hurt you have caused others by your selfishness and sin.

Death of Saul and His Sons

10 Now the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled before the Philistines, and fell slain on Mount Gilboa. ² The Philistines overtook Saul and his sons; and the Philistines killed Jonathan and Abinadab and Malchishua, sons of Saul. ³ The battle pressed hard on Saul; and the archers found him, and he was wounded by the archers. ⁴ Then Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword, and thrust me through with it, so that these uncircumcised may not come and make sport of me." But his armor-bearer was unwilling, for he was terrified. So Saul took his own sword and fell on it. ⁵ When his armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he also fell on his sword and died. ⁶ Thus Saul died; he and his three sons and all his house died together. ⁷ When all the men of Israel who were in the valley saw that the army^b had fled and that Saul and his sons were dead, they abandoned their towns and fled; and the Philistines came and occupied them.

⁸ The next day when the Philistines came to strip the dead, they found Saul and his sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. ⁹ They stripped him and took his head and his armor, and sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to carry the good news to their idols and to the people. ¹⁰ They put his armor in the temple of their gods, and fastened his head in the temple of Dagon. ¹¹ But when all Jabesh-gilead heard everything that the Philistines had done to Saul, ¹² all the valiant warriors got up and took away the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons, and brought them to Jabesh. Then they buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

¹³ So Saul died for his unfaithfulness; he was unfaithful to the LORD in that he did not keep the command of the LORD; moreover, he had consulted a medium, seeking guidance, ¹⁴ and did not seek guidance from the LORD. Therefore the LORD^c put him to death and turned the kingdom over to David son of Jesse.

David Anointed King of All Israel

11 Then all Israel gathered together to David at Hebron and said, "See, we are your bone and flesh. ² For some time now, even while Saul was king, it was you who commanded the army of Israel. The LORD your

^a Compare 8.35: Heb lacks *and Ahaz*

^b Heb *they*

^c Heb *he*

Read 1 Chronicles 11:1–9

All Israel offered David the kingship because he had already shown himself to be a more than capable leader of the Israelite armies. The Chronicler notes that this offer was made in accord with the divine will revealed through Samuel. David's first act as king was the capture of Jerusalem, which was destined to be both the political and the religious capital of Israel.

Reflect: Jerusalem was under the control of non-Israelites until the time of David, when he captured the city and made it his capital. The importance of Jerusalem for ancient Israel and early Judaism continued to grow until it was not simply “the city of David” but “the city of God.”

Pray: The city of Jerusalem still remains central to the identity of the Jewish people. The city also has religious and political significance for the Palestinian people. These conflicting claims have complicated the peace process. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.

Act: Acquaint yourself with the political and religious disputes over Jerusalem—including those having to do with the status of Christians and the Christian holy places in the city. Make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and experience first hand the tension between the holiness of the city and the disputes over political control.

God said to you: It is you who shall be shepherd of my people Israel, you who shall be ruler over my people Israel.”³ So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and David made a covenant with them at Hebron before the LORD. And they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the LORD by Samuel.

Jerusalem Captured

4 David and all Israel marched to Jerusalem, that is Jebus, where the Jebusites were, the inhabitants of the land.⁵ The inhabitants of Jebus said to David, “You will not come in here.” Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion, now the city of David.⁶ David had said, “Whoever attacks the Jebusites first shall be chief and commander.” And Joab son of Zeruiah went up first, so he became chief.⁷ David resided in the stronghold; therefore it was called the city of David.⁸ He built the city all around, from the Millo in complete circuit; and Joab repaired the rest of the city.⁹ And David became greater and greater, for the LORD of hosts was with him.

David's Mighty Men and Their Exploits

10 Now these are the chiefs of David's warriors, who gave him strong support in his kingdom, together with all Israel, to make him king, according to the word of the LORD concerning Israel.¹¹ This is an account of David's mighty warriors: Jashobeam, son of Hachmoni,^a was chief of the Three;^b he wielded his spear against three hundred whom he killed at one time.

12 And next to him among the three warriors was Eleazar son of Dodo, the Ahohite.¹³ He was with David at Pas-dammim when the Philistines were gathered there for battle. There was a plot of ground full of barley. Now the people had fled from the Philistines,¹⁴ but he and David took their stand in the middle of the plot, defended it, and killed the Philistines; and the LORD saved them by a great victory.

15 Three of the thirty chiefs went down to the rock to David at the cave of Adullam, while the army of Philistines was encamped in the valley of Rephaim.¹⁶ David was then in the stronghold; and the garrison of the Philistines was then at Bethlehem.¹⁷ David said longingly, “O that someone would give me water to drink from the well of Bethlehem that is by the gate!”¹⁸ Then the Three broke through the camp of the Philistines, and drew water from the well of Bethlehem that was by the gate, and they brought it to David. But David would not drink of it; he poured it out to the LORD,¹⁹ and said, “My God forbid that I should do this. Can I drink the blood of these men? For at the risk of their

^a Or a Hachmonite

^b Compare 2 Sam 23.8: Heb *Thirty* or *captains*

Read 1 Chronicles 11:10–47

One of the reasons for David's being acclaimed king was his success in battles against the Philistines, who vied with Israel for control of Canaan. David was successful because of his ability to surround himself with loyal followers. This passage provides the names of more than thirty of these followers and tells of the exploits of several of the most prominent among them.

Reflect: The text says that the warriors supported David "to make him king" (v. 10). David could not succeed without the help of many people. The principal opposition he faced came from the Philistines, who sought to control the territory that the Israelite tribes claimed as their own. Consider how important it is that the Christian faithful collaborate with their pastors and bishops in enabling the church to fulfill its mission.

Pray: Pray for the lay ecclesial ministers in your parish. They have their role to play in the church's mission. Most are volunteers and all are necessary to meet the pastoral needs of the parish.

Act: Assess your gifts and place them at the service of the people of God. Prepare yourself for service by participating in appropriate training programs.

lives they brought it." Therefore he would not drink it. The three warriors did these things.

20 Now Abishai,^a the brother of Joab, was chief of the Thirty.^b With his spear he fought against three hundred and killed them, and won a name beside the Three. ²¹ He was the most renowned^c of the Thirty,^b and became their commander; but he did not attain to the Three.

22 Benaiah son of Jehoiada was a valiant man^d of Kabzeel, a doer of great deeds; he struck down two sons of^e Ariel of Moab. He also went down and killed a lion in a pit on a day when snow had fallen. ²³ And he killed an Egyptian, a man of great stature, five cubits tall. The Egyptian had in his hand a spear like a weaver's beam; but Benaiah went against him with a staff, snatched the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and killed him with his own spear. ²⁴ Such were the things Benaiah son of Jehoiada did, and he won a name beside the three warriors. ²⁵ He was renowned among the Thirty, but he did not attain to the Three. And David put him in charge of his bodyguard.

26 The warriors of the armies were Asahel brother of Joab, Elhanan son of Dodo of Bethlehem, ²⁷ Shammoth of Harod,^f Helez the Pelonite, ²⁸ Ira son of Ikkesh of Tekoa, Abiezer of Anathoth, ²⁹ Sibbecai the Hushathite, Ilai the Ahohite, ³⁰ Maharai of Netophah, Heled son of Baanah of Netophah, ³¹ Ithai son of Ribai of Gibeath of the Benjaminites, Benaiah of Pirathon, ³² Hurai of the wadis of Gaash, Abiel the Arbathite, ³³ Azmaveth of Baharum, Eliahba of Shaalbon, ³⁴ Hashem^g the Gizonite, Jonathan son of Shagee the Hararite, ³⁵ Ahiam son of Sachar the Hararite, Eliphaz son of Ur, ³⁶ Hephher the Mecherathite, Ahijah the Pelonite, ³⁷ Hezro of Carmel, Naarai son of Ezbai, ³⁸ Joel the brother of Nathan, Mibhar son of Hagri, ³⁹ Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai of Beeroth, the armor-bearer of Joab son of Zeruah, ⁴⁰ Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite, ⁴¹ Uriah the Hittite, Zabad son of Ahlai, ⁴² Adina son of Shiza the Reubenite, a leader of the Reubenites, and thirty with him, ⁴³ Hanan son of Maacah, and Joshaphat the Mithnite, ⁴⁴ Uzzia the Ashterathite, Shama and Jeiel sons of Hotham the Aroerite, ⁴⁵ Jedaiel son of Shimri, and his brother Joha the Tizite, ⁴⁶ Eliel the Mahavite, and Jeribai and Joshaviah sons of Elnaam, and Ithmah the Moabite, ⁴⁷ Eliel, and Obed, and Jaasiel the Mezobaite.

David's Followers in the Wilderness

12 The following are those who came to David at Ziklag, while he could not move about freely because of Saul son of Kish; they were among the mighty warriors who helped him in war. ² They were archers,

^a Gk Vg Tg Compare 2 Sam 23.18: Heb *Abshai*

^b Syr: Heb *Three*

^c Compare 2 Sam 23.19: Heb *more renowned among the two*

^d Syr: Heb *the son of a valiant man*

^e See 2 Sam 23.20: Heb lacks *sons of*

^f Compare 2 Sam 23.25: Heb *the Hararite*

^g Compare Gk and 2 Sam 23.32: Heb *the sons of Hashem*

Read 1 Chronicles 12:1–22

The Chronicler notes that David enjoyed wide support during his banishment from the court of Saul. Some of Saul's own relatives from the tribe of Benjamin deserted Saul and joined David's band. Members of other tribes, including those of Gad, Judah, and Manasseh, did the same. What the Chronicler intimates is that people were able to recognize in David the qualities of leadership that Saul no longer possessed.

Reflect: The Catholic spiritual tradition embraces a wide spectrum of spiritualities. The variety is such that there is an approach to the spiritual life for everyone. How is your spiritual life nourished? Do you have a spiritual director? Do you follow any one spiritual tradition?

Pray: Praise God for giving the Christian people the example of the saints, who show us the many ways of living the Christian life. Pray for guidance to choose the path that can best nourish your spiritual life.

Act: Find a spiritual director who can help you choose the spiritual tradition that most resonates with your personality, gifts, and experiences.

and could shoot arrows and sling stones with either the right hand or the left; they were Benjaminites, Saul's kindred. ³ The chief was Ahiezer, then Joash, both sons of Shemaah of Gibeah; also Jeziel and Pelet sons of Azmaveth; Beracah, Jehu of Anathoth, ⁴ Ishmaiah of Gibeon, a warrior among the Thirty and a leader over the Thirty; Jeremiah,^a Jahaziel, Johanan, Jozabad of Gederah, ⁵ Eluzai,^b Jerimoth, Bealiah, Shemariah, Shephatiah the Haruphite; ⁶ Elkanah, Isshiah, Azarel, Joezer, and Jashobeam, the Korahites; ⁷ and Joelah and Zebadiah, sons of Jeroham of Gedor.

8 From the Gadites there went over to David at the stronghold in the wilderness mighty and experienced warriors, expert with shield and spear, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and who were swift as gazelles on the mountains: ⁹ Ezer the chief, Obadiah second, Eliab third, ¹⁰ Mishmannah fourth, Jeremiah fifth, ¹¹ Attai sixth, Eliel seventh, ¹² Johanan eighth, Elzabad ninth, ¹³ Jeremiah tenth, Machbannai eleventh. ¹⁴ These Gadites were officers of the army, the least equal to a hundred and the greatest to a thousand. ¹⁵ These are the men who crossed the Jordan in the first month, when it was overflowing all its banks, and put to flight all those in the valleys, to the east and to the west.

16 Some Benjaminites and Judahites came to the stronghold to David. ¹⁷ David went out to meet them and said to them, "If you have come to me in friendship, to help me, then my heart will be knit to you; but if you have come to betray me to my adversaries, though my hands have done no wrong, then may the God of our ancestors see and give judgment." ¹⁸ Then the spirit came upon Amasai, chief of the Thirty, and he said,

"We are yours, O David;
and with you, O son of Jesse!
Peace, peace to you,
and peace to the one who helps you!
For your God is the one who helps you."

Then David received them, and made them officers of his troops.

19 Some of the Manassites deserted to David when he came with the Philistines for the battle against Saul. (Yet he did not help them, for the rulers of the Philistines took counsel and sent him away, saying, "He will desert to his master Saul at the cost of our heads.") ²⁰ As he went to Ziklag these Manassites deserted to him: Adnah, Jozabad, Jediel, Michael, Jozabad, Elihu, and Zillethai, chiefs of the thousands in Manasseh. ²¹ They helped David against the band of raiders,^c for they were all warriors and commanders in the army. ²² Indeed

^a Heb verse 5

^b Heb verse 6

^c Or as officers of his troops

Read 1 Chronicles 12:23–40

The Chronicler presents the occasion of David's acclamation by the Israelite tribes as a joyous occasion, with martial pageantry surrounding David's coronation. The ceremonies and the attendant celebrations reflect the enthusiasm with which David's rule is met by the Israelite tribes, who are aware of David's achievements and confident in the future of their new king.

Reflect: How confident are you in the church's future? Do you find in the church's leadership a source of assurance? What would help you be confident and assured about the future?

Pray: The liturgy prays often for the church's leaders—because they are in need of the prayerful support of the Christian faithful.

Act: Join in the celebration of an important event in your parish or diocese. By your presence, you show your support for the church and its leaders.

from day to day people kept coming to David to help him, until there was a great army, like an army of God.

David's Army at Hebron

23 These are the numbers of the divisions of the armed troops who came to David in Hebron to turn the kingdom of Saul over to him, according to the word of the LORD. 24 The people of Judah bearing shield and spear numbered six thousand eight hundred armed troops. 25 Of the Simeonites, mighty warriors, seven thousand one hundred. 26 Of the Levites four thousand six hundred. 27 Jehoiada, leader of the house of Aaron, and with him three thousand seven hundred. 28 Zadok, a young warrior, and twenty-two commanders from his own ancestral house. 29 Of the Benjaminites, the kindred of Saul, three thousand, of whom the majority had continued to keep their allegiance to the house of Saul. 30 Of the Ephraimites, twenty thousand eight hundred, mighty warriors, notables in their ancestral houses. 31 Of the half-tribe of Manasseh, eighteen thousand, who were expressly named to come and make David king. 32 Of Issachar, those who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do, two hundred chiefs, and all their kindred under their command. 33 Of Zebulun, fifty thousand seasoned troops, equipped for battle with all the weapons of war, to help David^a with singleness of purpose. 34 Of Naphtali, a thousand commanders, with whom there were thirty-seven thousand armed with shield and spear. 35 Of the Danites, twenty-eight thousand six hundred equipped for battle. 36 Of Asher, forty thousand seasoned troops ready for battle. 37 Of the Reubenites and Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh from beyond the Jordan, one hundred twenty thousand armed with all the weapons of war.

38 All these, warriors arrayed in battle order, came to Hebron with full intent to make David king over all Israel; likewise all the rest of Israel were of a single mind to make David king. 39 They were there with David for three days, eating and drinking, for their kindred had provided for them. 40 And also their neighbors, from as far away as Issachar and Zebulun and Naphtali, came bringing food on donkeys, camels, mules, and oxen—abundant provisions of meal, cakes of figs, clusters of raisins, wine, oil, oxen, and sheep, for there was joy in Israel.

The Ark Brought from Kiriath-jearim

13 David consulted with the commanders of the thousands and of the hundreds, with every leader. 2 David said to the whole assembly of Israel, "If it seems good to you, and if it is the will of the LORD our

^a Gk: Heb lacks *David*

Read 1 Chronicles 13

The ark of God was the symbol of the divine presence in Israel's midst. When David became king, the ark was kept in the village of Kiriath-jearim, about eight miles west of Jerusalem. David wanted to bring the ark to Jerusalem, his own city, but an accident while the ark was being moved frightened David and he did not complete the transfer of the ark to Jerusalem.

Reflect: Think about how obstacles have prevented you from doing what you believed was the right thing to do. When projects do not proceed precisely as we hoped they would, we sometimes abandon them, though the obstacle may be nothing more than an inconvenience that can be dealt with creatively.

Pray: Ask God for the gift of perseverance, so that your enthusiasm for doing good may not lessen when more is required of you than you had anticipated.

Act: Develop strategies for dealing with the setbacks and obstacles that inevitably develop as we try to do good for others. Do not let these obstacles dampen your enthusiasm. Try to anticipate what might occur and be prepared to take the appropriate measures.

God, let us send abroad to our kindred who remain in all the land of Israel, including the priests and Levites in the cities that have pasture lands, that they may come together to us. ³ Then let us bring again the ark of our God to us; for we did not turn to it in the days of Saul.” ⁴ The whole assembly agreed to do so, for the thing pleased all the people.

⁵ So David assembled all Israel from the Shihor of Egypt to Lebo-hamath, to bring the ark of God from Kiriath-jearim. ⁶ And David and all Israel went up to Baalah, that is, to Kiriath-jearim, which belongs to Judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, the LORD, who is enthroned on the cherubim, which is called by his^a name. ⁷ They carried the ark of God on a new cart, from the house of Abinadab, and Uzzah and Ahio^b were driving the cart. ⁸ David and all Israel were dancing before God with all their might, with song and lyres and harps and tambourines and cymbals and trumpets.

⁹ When they came to the threshing floor of Chidon, Uzzah put out his hand to hold the ark, for the oxen shook it. ¹⁰ The anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzzah; he struck him down because he put out his hand to the ark; and he died there before God. ¹¹ David was angry because the LORD had burst out against Uzzah; so that place is called Perez-uzzah^c to this day. ¹² David was afraid of God that day; he said, “How can I bring the ark of God into my care?” ¹³ So David did not take the ark into his care into the city of David; he took it instead to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. ¹⁴ The ark of God remained with the household of Obed-edom in his house three months, and the LORD blessed the household of Obed-edom and all that he had.

David Established at Jerusalem

14 King Hiram of Tyre sent messengers to David, along with cedar logs, and masons and carpenters to build a house for him. ² David then perceived that the LORD had established him as king over Israel, and that his kingdom was highly exalted for the sake of his people Israel.

³ David took more wives in Jerusalem, and David became the father of more sons and daughters. ⁴ These are the names of the children whom he had in Jerusalem: Shammua, Shobab, and Nathan; Solomon, ⁵ Ibhahar, Elishua, and Elpelet; ⁶ Nogah, Nepheg, and Japhia; ⁷ Elishama, Beeliada, and Eliphelet.

Defeat of the Philistines

⁸ When the Philistines heard that David had been anointed king over all Israel, all the Philistines went up in search of David; and David heard of it and went out

^a Heb lacks his

^b Or and his brother

^c That is *Bursting Out Against Uzzah*

Read 1 Chronicles 14

The Chronicler presents David as enjoying an excellent reputation among the rulers of neighboring kingdoms. For example, Hiram, the king of Tyre, sent building materials to David for the construction of his palace. David's reputation was built, in large part, on his achievement in eliminating the Philistine threat to his rule.

Reflect: The Philistines were a constant threat to the Israelite tribes. When David became king, they moved against him so that they could achieve the total control over Canaan that they had always sought. Think about the principal obstacle you face in your spiritual life. Identify what prevents you from becoming the person God intends you to be.

Pray: Ask for the clarity to recognize the true state of your spiritual life and for the honesty to identify the obstacles you need to overcome.

Act: Seek the help of a spiritual director to guide you in confronting the obstacles to your spiritual growth. Follow the advice you receive.

Read 1 Chronicles 15:1–24

The Chronicler shows much interest in the temple personnel—particularly the Levites. Here the chronicles allude to the origins of the role of the Levites in sacred service: the ark was entrusted to their care by Moses. The Chronicler also notes that David added to the Levites' duties by appointing them to act as musicians and gatekeepers.

against them.⁹ Now the Philistines had come and made a raid in the valley of Rephaim.¹⁰ David inquired of God, "Shall I go up against the Philistines? Will you give them into my hand?" The LORD said to him, "Go up, and I will give them into your hand."¹¹ So he went up to Baal-perazim, and David defeated them there. David said, "God has burst out^a against my enemies by my hand, like a bursting flood." Therefore that place is called Baal-perazim.^b¹² They abandoned their gods there, and at David's command they were burned.

¹³ Once again the Philistines made a raid in the valley.¹⁴ When David again inquired of God, God said to him, "You shall not go up after them; go around and come on them opposite the balsam trees.¹⁵ When you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, then go out to battle; for God has gone out before you to strike down the army of the Philistines."¹⁶ David did as God had commanded him, and they struck down the Philistine army from Gibeon to Gezer.¹⁷ The fame of David went out into all lands, and the LORD brought the fear of him on all nations.

The Ark Brought to Jerusalem

15 David^c built houses for himself in the city of David, and he prepared a place for the ark of God and pitched a tent for it.² Then David commanded that no one but the Levites were to carry the ark of God, for the LORD had chosen them to carry the ark of the LORD and to minister to him forever.³ David assembled all Israel in Jerusalem to bring up the ark of the LORD to its place, which he had prepared for it.⁴ Then David gathered together the descendants of Aaron and the Levites:⁵ of the sons of Kohath, Uriel the chief, with one hundred twenty of his kindred;⁶ of the sons of Merari, Asaiah the chief, with two hundred twenty of his kindred;⁷ of the sons of Gershon, Joel the chief, with one hundred thirty of his kindred;⁸ of the sons of Elizaphan, Shemaiah the chief, with two hundred of his kindred;⁹ of the sons of Hebron, Eliel the chief, with eighty of his kindred;¹⁰ of the sons of Uzziel, Amminadab the chief, with one hundred twelve of his kindred.

¹¹ David summoned the priests Zadok and Abiathar, and the Levites Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel, and Amminadab.¹² He said to them, "You are the heads of families of the Levites; sanctify yourselves, you and your kindred, so that you may bring up the ark of the LORD, the God of Israel, to the place that I have prepared for it.¹³ Because you did not carry it the first time,^d the LORD our God burst out against us, because we did not give it proper care."¹⁴ So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the

^a Heb *paraz*

^b That is *Lord of Bursting Out*

^c Heb *He*

^d Meaning of Heb uncertain

Reflect: Music has an important place in divine worship. The Chronicler points out that the Levites were appointed by David as musicians to accompany the ark on its journey to Jerusalem. Do you appreciate the role that music has in the worship of the Christian community?

Pray: Participate actively in the singing at the liturgy so as to enhance the beauty of this form of prayer.

Act: Offer your musical talents to your parish music director. If you can sing, join the choir. If you can play a musical instrument, you may be able to add its beauty to the liturgy.

Read 1 Chronicles 15:25–29

The story of the ark's transfer to Jerusalem has one discordant note. Michal, one of David's wives, was a daughter of his predecessor, Saul. She apparently thought that David's behavior during the procession of the ark to Jerusalem was unbecoming, assuming that kings ought to act in a more "dignified" manner. Perhaps the Chronicler included this detail to discredit a member of Saul's family.

Reflect: How often have attempts at advancing the mission of the church been undermined by criticism? Can you think of a parish or diocesan initiative that has been the object of pointless criticism? Consider ways of being supportive of people who make new, imaginative efforts to spread the good news of Jesus Christ.

Pray: Pray for new church movements that seek to have the gospel touch the lives of people. Pray especially for those in these movements whose actions have been subject to pointless criticism.

Act: Seek out parishioners who need support in their ministries and offer them your thanks. Ask them if they need help. Write a letter of support to pastors and bishops concerning people and ministries that are unjustly criticized.

LORD, the God of Israel. ¹⁵ And the Levites carried the ark of God on their shoulders with the poles, as Moses had commanded according to the word of the LORD.

¹⁶ David also commanded the chiefs of the Levites to appoint their kindred as the singers to play on musical instruments, on harps and lyres and cymbals, to raise loud sounds of joy. ¹⁷ So the Levites appointed Heman son of Joel; and of his kindred Asaph son of Berechiah; and of the sons of Merari, their kindred, Ethan son of Kushaiah; ¹⁸ and with them their kindred of the second order, Zechariah, Jaaziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, and Mikneiah, and the gatekeepers Obed-edom and Jeiel. ¹⁹ The singers Heman, Asaph, and Ethan were to sound bronze cymbals; ²⁰ Zechariah, Aziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Maaseiah, and Benaiah were to play harps according to Alamothe; ²¹ but Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed-edom, Jeiel, and Azariah were to lead with lyres according to the Sheminith. ²² Chenaniah, leader of the Levites in music, was to direct the music, for he understood it. ²³ Berechiah and Elkanah were to be gatekeepers for the ark. ²⁴ Shebaniah, Joshaphat, Nethanel, Amasai, Zechariah, Benaiah, and Eliezer, the priests, were to blow the trumpets before the ark of God. Obed-edom and Jehiah also were to be gatekeepers for the ark.

²⁵ So David and the elders of Israel, and the commanders of the thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD from the house of Obed-edom with rejoicing. ²⁶ And because God helped the Levites who were carrying the ark of the covenant of the LORD, they sacrificed seven bulls and seven rams. ²⁷ David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, as also were all the Levites who were carrying the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the leader of the music of the singers; and David wore a linen ephod. ²⁸ So all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, to the sound of the horn, trumpets, and cymbals, and made loud music on harps and lyres.

²⁹ As the ark of the covenant of the LORD came to the city of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing; and she despised him in her heart.

The Ark Placed in the Tent

16 They brought in the ark of God, and set it inside the tent that David had pitched for it; and they offered burnt offerings and offerings of well-being before God. ² When David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the offerings of well-being, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD; ³ and he distributed to

Read 1 Chronicles 16

The conclusion to the story of the ark's transfer to Jerusalem again focuses on the roles of the Levites and the priests. The Levites are portrayed as musicians and singers. One of the songs they sing on the occasion of the ark's arrival in Jerusalem is Psalm 105. The priests remain at Gibeon, the location of a shrine six miles north of Jerusalem, to offer appropriate sacrifices, since no place for such offerings is available in Jerusalem.

Reflect: Here the Chronicler introduces another class of temple personnel: the priests. One of their duties was to offer sacrifice as appointed by the Torah. Today Catholic priests have a similar responsibility: to offer the sacrifice of the Eucharist. Think about the significance of this priestly ministry for your Christian life.

Pray: In ancient Israel, priesthood was hereditary. Today the Catholic priesthood is regarded as a response to a calling from God. Pray that people will respond to God's call with generosity and love.

Act: Speak positively about the priesthood to your children. The most important "vocation directors" are parents, who invite their children to consider the priesthood—without unduly pressuring them.

every person in Israel—man and woman alike—to each a loaf of bread, a portion of meat,^a and a cake of raisins.

4 He appointed certain of the Levites as ministers before the ark of the LORD, to invoke, to thank, and to praise the LORD, the God of Israel. ⁵Asaph was the chief, and second to him Zechariah, Jeiel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-edom, and Jeiel, with harps and lyres; Asaph was to sound the cymbals, ⁶ and the priests Benaiah and Jahaziel were to blow trumpets regularly, before the ark of the covenant of God.

David's Psalm of Thanksgiving

7 Then on that day David first appointed the singing of praises to the LORD by Asaph and his kindred.

8 O give thanks to the LORD, call on his name, make known his deeds among the peoples.

9 Sing to him, sing praises to him, tell of all his wonderful works.

10 Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice.

11 Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his presence continually.

12 Remember the wonderful works he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he uttered,

13 O offspring of his servant Israel,^b children of Jacob, his chosen ones.

14 He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth.

15 Remember his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations,

16 the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac,

17 which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant,

18 saying, "To you I will give the land of Canaan as your portion for an inheritance."

19 When they were few in number, of little account, and strangers in the land,^c

20 wandering from nation to nation, from one kingdom to another people,

21 he allowed no one to oppress them; he rebuked kings on their account,

22 saying, "Do not touch my anointed ones; do my prophets no harm."

23 Sing to the LORD, all the earth. Tell of his salvation from day to day.

^a Compare Ck Syr Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Another reading is *Abraham* (compare Ps 105.6)

^c Heb *in it*

- 24 Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples.
- 25 For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
he is to be revered above all gods.
- 26 For all the gods of the peoples are idols,
but the LORD made the heavens.
- 27 Honor and majesty are before him;
strength and joy are in his place.
- 28 Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
- 29 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
bring an offering, and come before him.
Worship the LORD in holy splendor;
- 30 tremble before him, all the earth.
The world is firmly established; it shall never
be moved.
- 31 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice,
and let them say among the nations, "The
LORD is king!"
- 32 Let the sea roar, and all that fills it;
let the field exult, and everything in it.
- 33 Then shall the trees of the forest sing for joy
before the LORD, for he comes to judge the
earth.
- 34 O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
for his steadfast love endures forever.
- 35 Say also:

"Save us, O God of our salvation,
and gather and rescue us from among the
nations,
that we may give thanks to your holy name,
and glory in your praise.

- 36 Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting."

Then all the people said "Amen!" and praised the LORD.

Regular Worship Maintained

37 David left Asaph and his kinsfolk there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD to minister regularly before the ark as each day required, ³⁸ and also Obed-edom and his^a sixty-eight kinsfolk; while Obed-edom son of Jeduthun and Hosah were to be gatekeepers. ³⁹ And he left the priest Zadok and his kindred the priests before the tabernacle of the LORD in the high place that was at Gibeon, ⁴⁰ to offer burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of burnt offering regularly, morning and evening, according to all that is written in the law of the LORD that he commanded Israel. ⁴¹ With them were Heman and Jeduthun, and the rest of those

^a Gk Syr Vg: Heb *their*

chosen and expressly named to render thanks to the LORD, for his steadfast love endures forever. ⁴² Heman and Jeduthun had with them trumpets and cymbals for the music, and instruments for sacred

song. The sons of Jeduthun were appointed to the gate.

⁴³ Then all the people departed to their homes, and David went home to bless his household.

Read 1 Chronicles 17:1–15

This is the Chronicler's attempt to legitimate the rule of David and his dynasty. The story makes it clear that David's accession to the throne was by divine choice. God also determined that David's descendants would rule over Israel forever. It is important to note that Nathan quotes God as referring to Israel as "my kingdom." It does not belong to David or to his dynastic successors.

Reflect: Sometimes pastoral ministers become proprietors of the ministry they carry out in the name of Christ. It is important to remember that every ministry is always the work of the Spirit. We remain simply human instruments. The ministry belongs to Christ and the church, not to the minister.

Pray: Call upon the Spirit to empower those who exercise ministry for the good of the church. Pray that all pastoral ministers may appreciate the power and presence of Christ at work in them.

Act: Choose to be inclusive and empowering in your own ministry. Check the tendency to become a "Lone Ranger." Take specific steps to collaborate with others in the ministry you exercise for the good of the church.

God's Covenant with David

17 Now when David settled in his house, David said to the prophet Nathan, "I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of the covenant of the LORD is under a tent." ² Nathan said to David, "Do all that you have in mind, for God is with you."

³ But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying: ⁴ Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: You shall not build me a house to live in. ⁵ For I have not lived in a house since the day I brought out Israel to this very day, but I have lived in a tent and a tabernacle.^a ⁶ Wherever I have moved about among all Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people, saying, Why have you not built me a house of cedar? ⁷ Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people Israel; ⁸ and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies before you; and I will make for you a name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. ⁹ I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall wear them down no more, as they did formerly, ¹⁰ from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will subdue all your enemies.

Moreover I declare to you that the LORD will build you a house. ¹¹ When your days are fulfilled to go to be with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. ¹² He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. ¹³ I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me. I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from him who was before you, ¹⁴ but I will confirm him in my house and in my kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever. ¹⁵ In accordance with all these words and all this vision, Nathan spoke to David.

David's Prayer

¹⁶ Then King David went in and sat before the LORD, and said, "Who am I, O LORD God, and what is my house, that you have brought me thus far?" ¹⁷ And even

^a Gk 2 Sam 7.6: Heb *but I have been from tent to tent and from tabernacle*

Read 1 Chronicles 17:16–27

Here David prays, asking God to keep the promises made to him through Nathan the prophet. It is important to remember that the Chronicler is writing after David's kingdom and dynasty are no more and when prospects for their re-establishment are nonexistent. This prayer exemplifies an unbounded confidence in God's promises.

Reflect: How confident are you in the church's future? The evidence coming from Europe and North America is not encouraging. In the face of this evidence, do you continue to believe in the relevance of the church in the twenty-first century?

Pray: Ask for the gift of hope—a hope that looks to the future with confidence and assurance. We believe that Christ has already won the victory over sin and death. We look forward in hope to the experience of the full extent of Christ's victory.

Act: Act with the confidence that comes with faith and hope, remembering that nothing we do to advance the coming of God's reign on earth will ever be done in vain.

this was a small thing in your sight, O God; you have also spoken of your servant's house for a great while to come. You regard me as someone of high rank,^a O LORD God! ¹⁸ And what more can David say to you for honoring your servant? You know your servant. ¹⁹ For your servant's sake, O LORD, and according to your own heart, you have done all these great deeds, making known all these great things. ²⁰ There is no one like you, O LORD, and there is no God besides you, according to all that we have heard with our ears. ²¹ Who is like your people Israel, one nation on the earth whom God went to redeem to be his people, making for yourself a name for great and terrible things, in driving out nations before your people whom you redeemed from Egypt? ²² And you made your people Israel to be your people forever; and you, O LORD, became their God.

²³ "And now, O LORD, as for the word that you have spoken concerning your servant and concerning his house, let it be established forever, and do as you have promised. ²⁴ Thus your name will be established and magnified forever in the saying, 'The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, is Israel's God'; and the house of your servant David will be established in your presence. ²⁵ For you, my God, have revealed to your servant that you will build a house for him; therefore your servant has found it possible to pray before you. ²⁶ And now, O LORD, you are God, and you have promised this good thing to your servant; ²⁷ therefore may it please you to bless the house of your servant, that it may continue forever before you. For you, O LORD, have blessed and are blessed^b forever."

David's Kingdom Established and Extended

18 Some time afterward, David attacked the Philistines and subdued them; he took Gath and its villages from the Philistines.

² He defeated Moab, and the Moabites became subject to David and brought tribute.

³ David also struck down King Hadadezer of Zobah, toward Hamath,^a as he went to set up a monument at the river Euphrates. ⁴ David took from him one thousand chariots, seven thousand cavalry, and twenty thousand foot soldiers. David hamstringed all the chariot horses, but left one hundred of them. ⁵ When the Arameans of Damascus came to help King Hadadezer of Zobah, David killed twenty-two thousand Arameans. ⁶ Then David put garrisons^c in Aram of Damascus; and the Arameans became subject to David, and brought tribute. The LORD gave victory to David wherever he went. ⁷ David took the gold shields that were carried by the servants of Hadadezer, and brought them to Jerusalem. ⁸ From Tib-

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

^b Or and it is blessed

^c Ck Vg 2 Sam 8.6 Compare Syr: Heb lacks garrisons

Read 1 Chronicles 18

The Chronicler portrays David as having subjugated the nations in the vicinity of Israel, listing the Philistines to the southwest, the Moabites to the east, the Aramaeans to the north, the Ammonites to the northeast, and the Edomites to the southeast. The chapter concludes with a list of David's officials, including his military commanders, assistants, and priests. This is a highly idealized picture of David, with the Chronicler intimating that David's military victories are a sign of the legitimacy of his rule.

Reflect: The Chronicler assumes that David brought peace and prosperity to Israel by eliminating all potential military threats. Is there another way to ensure peace among nations that have competing interests in a particular region of the world? What is necessary to bring about peaceful relations between nations?

Pray: Pray that the leaders of nations may use their power not to dominate their neighbors—whether militarily, politically, or economically—but to strive for cooperation and collaboration to ensure peaceful relations.

Act: Become an active member of an organization that has as one of its goals reconciliation among the world's nations.

hath and from Cun, cities of Hadadezer, David took a vast quantity of bronze; with it Solomon made the bronze sea and the pillars and the vessels of bronze.

9 When King Tou of Hamath heard that David had defeated the whole army of King Hadadezer of Zobah, ¹⁰ he sent his son Hadoram to King David, to greet him and to congratulate him, because he had fought against Hadadezer and defeated him. Now Hadadezer had often been at war with Tou. He sent all sorts of articles of gold, of silver, and of bronze; ¹¹ these also King David dedicated to the LORD, together with the silver and gold that he had carried off from all the nations, from Edom, Moab, the Ammonites, the Philistines, and Amalek.

12 Abishai son of Zeruiah killed eighteen thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt. ¹³ He put garrisons in Edom; and all the Edomites became subject to David. And the LORD gave victory to David wherever he went.

David's Administration

14 So David reigned over all Israel; and he administered justice and equity to all his people. ¹⁵ Joab son of Zeruiah was over the army; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was recorder; ¹⁶ Zadok son of Ahitub and Ahimelech son of Abiathar were priests; Shavsha was secretary; ¹⁷ Benaiah son of Jehoiada was over the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and David's sons were the chief officials in the service of the king.

Defeat of the Ammonites and Arameans

19 Some time afterward, King Nahash of the Ammonites died, and his son succeeded him. ² David said, "I will deal loyally with Hanun son of Nahash, for his father dealt loyally with me." So David sent messengers to console him concerning his father. When David's servants came to Hanun in the land of the Ammonites, to console him, ³ the officials of the Ammonites said to Hanun, "Do you think, because David has sent consolers to you, that he is honoring your father? Have not his servants come to you to search and to overthrow and to spy out the land?" ⁴ So Hanun seized David's servants, shaved them, cut off their garments in the middle at their hips, and sent them away; ⁵ and they departed. When David was told about the men, he sent messengers to them, for they felt greatly humiliated. The king said, "Remain at Jericho until your beards have grown, and then return."

6 When the Ammonites saw that they had made themselves odious to David, Hanun and the Ammonites sent a thousand talents of silver to hire chariots and cavalry from Mesopotamia, from Aram-maacah and from Zobah. ⁷ They hired thirty-two thousand chariots

Read 1 Chronicles 19:1—20:3

Here the Chronicler describes a war with Ammon that was the result of an insult directed at ambassadors sent by David to join in the mourning for the recent death of the Ammonite king. David's intentions were misunderstood, leading to a coalition of Ammon and Aram that David defeated. It was during this war that David committed adultery and murder in the Bathsheba incident (see 2 Sam 11). The Chronicler does not tell this story because it is at odds with the idealized picture of David he wishes to present to his readers.

Reflect: How do we deal with the unpleasant aspects of a person's past? Can we move beyond that past and allow the person to begin again? Are there aspects of a person's past that we cannot ignore? Are there limits to forgiveness and reconciliation?

Pray: Memories of past hurts can control our current relations with family, friends, and colleagues. Ask for the gift to forgive and move on.

Act: Are there individuals in your life whose actions have hurt you? Have you been able to forgive them? Take the first step by forgiving and then move on to reconciliation with any such persons.

and the king of Maacah with his army, who came and camped before Medeba. And the Ammonites were mustered from their cities and came to battle.⁸ When David heard of it, he sent Joab and all the army of the warriors.⁹ The Ammonites came out and drew up in battle array at the entrance of the city, and the kings who had come were by themselves in the open country.

10 When Joab saw that the line of battle was set against him both in front and in the rear, he chose some of the picked men of Israel and arrayed them against the Arameans;¹¹ the rest of his troops he put in the charge of his brother Abishai, and they were arrayed against the Ammonites.¹² He said, "If the Arameans are too strong for me, then you shall help me; but if the Ammonites are too strong for you, then I will help you.¹³ Be strong, and let us be courageous for our people and for the cities of our God; and may the LORD do what seems good to him."¹⁴ So Joab and the troops who were with him advanced toward the Arameans for battle; and they fled before him.¹⁵ When the Ammonites saw that the Arameans fled, they likewise fled before Abishai, Joab's brother, and entered the city. Then Joab came to Jerusalem.

16 But when the Arameans saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they sent messengers and brought out the Arameans who were beyond the Euphrates, with Shophach the commander of the army of Hadadezer at their head.¹⁷ When David was informed, he gathered all Israel together, crossed the Jordan, came to them, and drew up his forces against them. When David set the battle in array against the Arameans, they fought with him.¹⁸ The Arameans fled before Israel; and David killed seven thousand Aramean charioteers and forty thousand foot soldiers, and also killed Shophach the commander of their army.¹⁹ When the servants of Hadadezer saw that they had been defeated by Israel, they made peace with David, and became subject to him. So the Arameans were not willing to help the Ammonites any more.

Siege and Capture of Rabbah

20 In the spring of the year, the time when kings go out to battle, Joab led out the army, ravaged the country of the Ammonites, and came and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem. Joab attacked Rabbah, and overthrew it.² David took the crown of Milcom^a from his head; he found that it weighed a talent of gold, and in it was a precious stone; and it was placed on David's head. He also brought out the booty of the city, a very great amount.³ He brought out the people who were in it, and set them to work^b

^a Gk Vg See 1 Kings 11.5, 33: MT of their king

^b Compare 2 Sam 12.31: Heb and he sawed

Read 1 Chronicles 20:4–8

The Chronicler used the books of Samuel and Kings as a source for his version of the story of David. Here the Chronicler deals with a problem in the books of Samuel: 1 Samuel 17:49 says that David slew Goliath, and 2 Samuel 21:19 says that a certain Elhanan killed Goliath. The Chronicler, however, has Elhanan kill Lahmi, Goliath's brother. What the passage shows is that the Philistines were a continuing threat to Israelite control of Canaan.

Reflect: No matter how many times the Chronicler has David defeat the Philistines, they remain a very serious threat to David and Israel. How do you deal with a problem that keeps resurfacing in your life with God? No matter how effectively you may have dealt with it, it keeps coming back to disrupt your spiritual peace.

Pray: Ask for patience as you deal with problems and issues that keep coming back despite your good efforts to deal with them decisively.

Act: Do not give in to discouragement. With the help of a spiritual director, continue to deal forthrightly with any problem that you need to overcome in your spiritual life.

Read 1 Chronicles 21:1–17

The Chronicler bases his story of the census and its aftermath on 2 Samuel 24, but with some interesting variations. According to 2 Samuel, it was God who told David to take a census of Israel. When the Chronicler wrote about two hundred years later, it was no longer theologically permissible to blame God directly for natural evils such as the plague that Israel suffered after the census. The Chronicler asserts that it was “a satan” who led David into wrongdoing. The origins of this story probably go back to popular opposition to a census, which was taken to facilitate the collection of taxes.

with saws and iron picks and axes.^a Thus David did to all the cities of the Ammonites. Then David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.

Exploits against the Philistines

4 After this, war broke out with the Philistines at Gezer; then Sibbecai the Hushathite killed Sippai, who was one of the descendants of the giants; and the Philistines were subdued. ⁵ Again there was war with the Philistines; and Elhanan son of Jair killed Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam. ⁶ Again there was war at Gath, where there was a man of great size, who had six fingers on each hand, and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number; he also was descended from the giants. ⁷ When he taunted Israel, Jonathan son of Shimea, David's brother, killed him. ⁸ These were descended from the giants in Gath; they fell by the hand of David and his servants.

The Census and Plague

21 Satan stood up against Israel, and incited David to count the people of Israel. ² So David said to Joab and the commanders of the army, “Go, number Israel, from Beer-sheba to Dan, and bring me a report, so that I may know their number.” ³ But Joab said, “May the LORD increase the number of his people a hundredfold! Are they not, my lord the king, all of them my lord's servants? Why then should my lord require this? Why should he bring guilt on Israel?” ⁴ But the king's word prevailed against Joab. So Joab departed and went throughout all Israel, and came back to Jerusalem. ⁵ Joab gave the total count of the people to David. In all Israel there were one million one hundred thousand men who drew the sword, and in Judah four hundred seventy thousand who drew the sword. ⁶ But he did not include Levi and Benjamin in the numbering, for the king's command was abhorrent to Joab.

⁷ But God was displeased with this thing, and he struck Israel. ⁸ David said to God, “I have sinned greatly in that I have done this thing. But now, I pray you, take away the guilt of your servant; for I have done very foolishly.” ⁹ The LORD spoke to Gad, David's seer, saying, ¹⁰ “Go and say to David, ‘Thus says the LORD: Three things I offer you; choose one of them, so that I may do it to you.’” ¹¹ So Gad came to David and said to him, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Take your choice: ¹² either three years of famine; or three months of devastation by your foes, while the sword of your enemies overtakes you; or three days of the sword of the LORD, pestilence on the land, and the angel of the LORD destroying throughout

^a Compare 2 Sam 12.31: Heb saws

Reflect: Who is responsible for the presence and power of evil in the world? In the story of the census, 2 Samuel blames God while 1 Chronicles blames “a satan.” Are you satisfied with either answer?

Pray: In the Lord’s Prayer, we ask: “deliver us from evil” and “lead us not into temptation.” We look for God’s help in resisting the power that evil has over human beings.

Act: The power that evil has over human beings can be overcome by actions that flow from generosity, love, and forgiveness. Look to your relationships and determine how you can be a force for good in those relationships.

Read 1 Chronicles 21:18—22:1

This passage serves as a transition piece to the chronicler’s principal concern: the temple and its service. Here David buys the threshing floor on which the temple will one day be built. While 2 Samuel 24:24 says that David paid fifty shekels of silver for the threshing floor, the Chronicler insists that the price was much higher: six hundred shekels of gold, which is five hundred times the price quoted in 2 Samuel. David does not actually build the temple, but he does erect an altar. The fire from heaven that consumes the sacrifices placed on the altar is a sign of God’s approval of David’s actions.

Reflect: For the Chronicler, Israel’s future was determined by its commitment to the worship of its God. The temple, its rituals, and its personnel were central concerns of the Chronicler. What role does the church’s liturgy have in your spiritual life? Can you describe your piety as liturgical?

Pray: Plan to have your prayer follow the rhythms of the liturgical seasons. Pray along with the church as it moves through the liturgical year.

all the territory of Israel.’ Now decide what answer I shall return to the one who sent me.”¹³ Then David said to Gad, “I am in great distress; let me fall into the hand of the LORD, for his mercy is very great; but let me not fall into human hands.”

14 So the LORD sent a pestilence on Israel; and seventy thousand persons fell in Israel. ¹⁵ And God sent an angel to Jerusalem to destroy it; but when he was about to destroy it, the LORD took note and relented concerning the calamity; he said to the destroying angel, “Enough! Stay your hand.” The angel of the LORD was then standing by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. ¹⁶ David looked up and saw the angel of the LORD standing between earth and heaven, and in his hand a drawn sword stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell on their faces. ¹⁷ And David said to God, “Was it not I who gave the command to count the people? It is I who have sinned and done very wickedly. But these sheep, what have they done? Let your hand, I pray, O LORD my God, be against me and against my father’s house; but do not let your people be plagued!”

David’s Altar and Sacrifice

18 Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to tell David that he should go up and erect an altar to the LORD on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. ¹⁹ So David went up following Gad’s instructions, which he had spoken in the name of the LORD. ²⁰ Ornan turned and saw the angel; and while his four sons who were with him hid themselves, Ornan continued to thresh wheat. ²¹ As David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David; he went out from the threshing floor, and did obeisance to David with his face to the ground. ²² David said to Ornan, “Give me the site of the threshing floor that I may build on it an altar to the LORD—give it to me at its full price—so that the plague may be averted from the people.” ²³ Then Ornan said to David, “Take it; and let my lord the king do what seems good to him; see, I present the oxen for burnt offerings, and the threshing sledges for the wood, and the wheat for a grain offering. I give it all.” ²⁴ But King David said to Ornan, “No; I will buy them for the full price. I will not take for the LORD what is yours, nor offer burnt offerings that cost me nothing.” ²⁵ So David paid Ornan six hundred shekels of gold by weight for the site. ²⁶ David built there an altar to the LORD and presented burnt offerings and offerings of well-being. He called upon the LORD, and he answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering. ²⁷ Then the LORD commanded the angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath.

Act: Be an active and informed participant in the church's liturgical worship. Read the lessons assigned for Sunday Eucharist during the preceding week and allow them to serve as a focus for your prayer.

Read 1 Chronicles 22:2–5

While 1 Kings 5 credits Solomon with making the material preparations for the building of the temple, this passage credits David with making these preparations. This is another example of the idealized portrait of David that the Chronicler is painting.

Reflect: The Chronicler asserts that the temple to be built in Jerusalem is to be so magnificent that its fame will be known throughout the world. What do you think about the financial resources that are devoted to church buildings—in particular cathedrals and shrines? Should the church's limited financial resources be devoted to the building and maintenance of "magnificent" structures?

Pray: Visit your diocesan cathedral or a shrine in your area. Allow the beauty and magnificence of that structure to inspire your prayer.

Act: Join with the people of your parish in maintaining the beauty of your parish church. Offer your help in cleaning and maintaining your place of worship.

Read 1 Chronicles 22:6–16

While the Chronicler wished to portray David as the ideal king, the tradition the Chronicler received credited not David but his son Solomon with the building of the temple. The Chronicler offers a reason for this: given the blood that David had shed in the many wars he had fought, it would not have been appropriate for him to build the temple. It was more appropriate for the temple to be built by a man of peace. (The Hebrew word for "peace" is a component of Solomon's Hebrew name.)

The Place Chosen for the Temple

28 At that time, when David saw that the LORD had answered him at the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite, he made his sacrifices there. 29 For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses had made in the wilderness, and the altar of burnt offering were at that time in the high place at Gibeon; 30 but David could not go before it to inquire of God, for he was afraid of the sword **22** of the angel of the LORD. 1 Then David said, "Here shall be the house of the LORD God and here the altar of burnt offering for Israel."

David Prepares to Build the Temple

2 David gave orders to gather together the aliens who were residing in the land of Israel, and he set stonecutters to prepare dressed stones for building the house of God. 3 David also provided great stores of iron for nails for the doors of the gates and for clamps, as well as bronze in quantities beyond weighing, 4 and cedar logs without number—for the Sidonians and Tyrians brought great quantities of cedar to David. 5 For David said, "My son Solomon is young and inexperienced, and the house that is to be built for the LORD must be exceedingly magnificent, famous and glorified throughout all lands; I will therefore make preparation for it." So David provided materials in great quantity before his death.

David's Charge to Solomon and the Leaders

6 Then he called for his son Solomon and charged him to build a house for the LORD, the God of Israel. 7 David said to Solomon, "My son, I had planned to build a house to the name of the LORD my God. 8 But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 'You have shed much blood and have waged great wars; you shall not build a house to my name, because you have shed so much blood in my sight on the earth. 9 See, a son shall be born to you; he shall be a man of peace. I will give him peace from all his enemies on every side; for his name shall be Solomon,^a and I will give peace^b and quiet to Israel in his days. 10 He shall build a house for my name. He shall be a son to me, and I will be a father to him, and I will establish his royal throne in Israel forever.' 11 Now, my son, the LORD be with you, so that you may succeed in building the house of the LORD your God, as he has spoken concerning you. 12 Only, may the LORD grant you discretion and understanding, so that when he gives you charge over Israel you may keep the law of the LORD your God. 13 Then you will prosper if you are careful to observe the statutes and the ordinances that the LORD commanded Moses for Is-

^a Heb *Shelomoh*

^b Heb *shalom*

Reflect: David charges Solomon to observe the law of Moses, for only then will Solomon succeed in fulfilling the charge to build the temple. Consider the importance of an authentic commitment to living gospel values if one is to be effective in one's ministry. People expect believers to live according to the values they profess.

Pray: Ask for the grace to live the values you profess, since this is a prerequisite for an effective Christian presence in the world.

Act: Become a person of peace, that is, a person reconciled with others. This will enable you to live a life of authentic Christian witness.

Read 1 Chronicles 22:17-19

The Chronicler suggests that the building of a temple for Israel's God provided an opportunity for the people to express their gratitude for the blessings of peace and prosperity that God had given them.

Reflect: Do you consider the building of churches to be an act of thanksgiving for the blessings that God has bestowed? Perhaps you look upon a church as simply fulfilling a utilitarian purpose: the community of faith needs a place to assemble. What significance do church buildings have for you?

Pray: Pray for a parish community that is involved in a building project. Pray for the architects, the builders, the fund-raisers, the pastor, and the people whose sacrificial gifts make it possible for the church to be built.

Act: If your parish is building a place for worship or is remodeling one already built, provide financial support. Help retire the debt. If your church is already built and paid for, look for a Christian community in the missions that needs help with a building project and provide financial support for that community.

rael. Be strong and of good courage. Do not be afraid or dismayed. ¹⁴ With great pains I have provided for the house of the LORD one hundred thousand talents of gold, one million talents of silver, and bronze and iron beyond weighing, for there is so much of it; timber and stone too I have provided. To these you must add more. ¹⁵ You have an abundance of workers: stonemasons, masons, carpenters, and all kinds of artisans without number, skilled in working ¹⁶ gold, silver, bronze, and iron. Now begin the work, and the LORD be with you."

¹⁷ David also commanded all the leaders of Israel to help his son Solomon, saying, ¹⁸ "Is not the LORD your God with you? Has he not given you peace on every side? For he has delivered the inhabitants of the land into my hand; and the land is subdued before the LORD and his people. ¹⁹ Now set your mind and heart to seek the LORD your God. Go and build the sanctuary of the LORD God so that the ark of the covenant of the LORD and the holy vessels of God may be brought into a house built for the name of the LORD."

Families of the Levites and Their Functions

23 When David was old and full of days, he made his son Solomon king over Israel.

² David assembled all the leaders of Israel and the priests and the Levites. ³ The Levites, thirty years old and upward, were counted, and the total was thirty-eight thousand. ⁴ "Twenty-four thousand of these," David said, "shall have charge of the work in the house of the LORD, six thousand shall be officers and judges, ⁵ four thousand gatekeepers, and four thousand shall offer praises to the LORD with the instruments that I have made for praise." ⁶ And David organized them in divisions corresponding to the sons of Levi: Gershon,^a Kohath, and Merari.

⁷ The sons of Gershon^b were Ladan and Shimei. ⁸ The sons of Ladan: Jehiel the chief, Zetham, and Joel, three. ⁹ The sons of Shimei: Shelomoth, Haziël, and Haran, three. These were the heads of families of Ladan. ¹⁰ And the sons of Shimei: Jahath, Zina, Jeush, and Beriah. These four were the sons of Shimei. ¹¹ Jahath was the chief, and Zizah the second; but Jeush and Beriah did not have many sons, so they were enrolled as a single family.

¹² The sons of Kohath: Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, four. ¹³ The sons of Amram: Aaron and Moses. Aaron was set apart to consecrate the most holy things, so that he and his sons forever should make offerings before the LORD, and minister to him and pronounce

^a Or *Gershom*; See 1 Chr 6.1, note, and 23.15

^b Vg Compare Gk Syr: Heb to the *Gershonite*

Read 1 Chronicles 23

The history of the Israelite priesthood is very complex. What the Chronicler does is take the organization of temple personnel operative in his own day and project it back into earlier periods. He credits David with the organization of the groups who serve in the temple. The Levites form a type of "lower clergy" whose duty it is to assist the priests. The Levites are to be present at all temple services.

Reflect: The Chronicler presents David as having been very concerned about good order in Israel's worship. The king appointed members of the tribe of Levi to serve the temple and its priests. What is your contribution to your community's worship? Do your presence and participation enhance the quality of that worship?

Pray: Pray for the people responsible for your community's worship—the presider, the servers, the readers, the choir, the extraordinary ministers of the Eucharist—that they may exercise their ministry with the care and dignity that it deserves.

Act: Be an active participant in your community's liturgical worship. Pray and sing along with your fellow worshipers.

blessings in his name forever; ¹⁴ but as for Moses the man of God, his sons were to be reckoned among the tribe of Levi. ¹⁵ The sons of Moses: Gershom and Eliezer. ¹⁶ The sons of Gershom: Shebuel the chief. ¹⁷ The sons of Eliezer: Rehabiah the chief; Eliezer had no other sons, but the sons of Rehabiah were very numerous. ¹⁸ The sons of Izhar: Shelomith the chief. ¹⁹ The sons of Hebron: Jeriah the chief, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, and Jekameam the fourth. ²⁰ The sons of Uzziel: Micah the chief and Isshiah the second.

²¹ The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. The sons of Mahli: Eleazar and Kish. ²² Eleazar died having no sons, but only daughters; their kindred, the sons of Kish, married them. ²³ The sons of Mushi: Mahli, Eder, and Jeremoth, three.

²⁴ These were the sons of Levi by their ancestral houses, the heads of families as they were enrolled according to the number of the names of the individuals from twenty years old and upward who were to do the work for the service of the house of the LORD. ²⁵ For David said, "The LORD, the God of Israel, has given rest to his people; and he resides in Jerusalem forever. ²⁶ And so the Levites no longer need to carry the tabernacle or any of the things for its service"—²⁷ for according to the last words of David these were the number of the Levites from twenty years old and upward—²⁸ "but their duty shall be to assist the descendants of Aaron for the service of the house of the LORD, having the care of the courts and the chambers, the cleansing of all that is holy, and any work for the service of the house of God; ²⁹ to assist also with the rows of bread, the choice flour for the grain offering, the wafers of unleavened bread, the baked offering, the offering mixed with oil, and all measures of quantity or size. ³⁰ And they shall stand every morning, thanking and praising the LORD, and likewise at evening, ³¹ and whenever burnt offerings are offered to the LORD on sabbaths, new moons, and appointed festivals, according to the number required of them, regularly before the LORD. ³² Thus they shall keep charge of the tent of meeting and the sanctuary, and shall attend the descendants of Aaron, their kindred, for the service of the house of the LORD."

Divisions of the Priests

24 The divisions of the descendants of Aaron were these. The sons of Aaron: Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar. ² But Nadab and Abihu died before their father, and had no sons; so Eleazar and Ithamar became the priests. ³ Along with Zadok of the sons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the sons of Ithamar, David organized them according to the appointed duties in

Read 1 Chronicles 24

The descendants of Aaron were designated as priests in two lines from Aaron's two surviving sons: Eleazar and Ithamar. These two priestly lines were organized into twenty-four groups. The priests were assigned their particular functions by lot. Ancient Israel regarded the casting of lots to be a legitimate way to determine the divine will. The Chronicler suggests that while David may have provided an organizational structure for the priesthood, it was God who established the duties of the priesthood.

Reflect: The Chronicler makes it clear that the priesthood and its responsibilities were established by God. The church believes that the priesthood in the new covenant is likewise established by God. What are the consequences of this belief for you?

Pray: Priests have responsibilities determined by God for the good of the Christian faithful. Pray that priests may fulfill these responsibilities with integrity.

Act: Become involved in Catholic organizations that support seminaries and seminary education.

their service. ⁴ Since more chief men were found among the sons of Eleazar than among the sons of Ithamar, they organized them under sixteen heads of ancestral houses of the sons of Eleazar, and eight of the sons of Ithamar. ⁵ They organized them by lot, all alike, for there were officers of the sanctuary and officers of God among both the sons of Eleazar and the sons of Ithamar. ⁶ The scribe Shemaiah son of Nethanel, a Levite, recorded them in the presence of the king, and the officers, and Zadok the priest, and Ahimelech son of Abiathar, and the heads of ancestral houses of the priests and of the Levites; one ancestral house being chosen for Eleazar and one chosen for Ithamar.

⁷ The first lot fell to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiiah, ⁸ the third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim, ⁹ the fifth to Malchijah, the sixth to Mijamin, ¹⁰ the seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah, ¹¹ the ninth to Jeshua, the tenth to Shecaniah, ¹² the eleventh to Eliashib, the twelfth to Jakim, ¹³ the thirteenth to Huppah, the fourteenth to Jeshebeab, ¹⁴ the fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immer, ¹⁵ the seventeenth to Hezir, the eighteenth to Happizez, ¹⁶ the nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jehezkel, ¹⁷ the twenty-first to Jachin, the twenty-second to Gamul, ¹⁸ the twenty-third to Delaiah, the twenty-fourth to Maaziah. ¹⁹ These had as their appointed duty in their service to enter the house of the LORD according to the procedure established for them by their ancestor Aaron, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded him.

Other Levites

²⁰ And of the rest of the sons of Levi: of the sons of Amram, Shubael; of the sons of Shubael, Jehdeiah. ²¹ Of Rehabiah: of the sons of Rehabiah, Isshiah the chief. ²² Of the Izharites, Shelomoth; of the sons of Shelomoth, Jahath. ²³ The sons of Hebron:^a Jeriah the chief,^b Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, Jekameam the fourth. ²⁴ The sons of Uzziel, Micah; of the sons of Micah, Shamir. ²⁵ The brother of Micah, Isshiah; of the sons of Isshiah, Zechariah. ²⁶ The sons of Merari: Mahli and Mushi. The sons of Jaaziah: Beno.^c ²⁷ The sons of Merari: of Jaaziah, Beno,^c Shoham, Zaccur, and Ibri. ²⁸ Of Mahli: Eleazar, who had no sons. ²⁹ Of Kish, the sons of Kish: Jerahmeel. ³⁰ The sons of Mushi: Mahli, Eder, and Jerimoth. These were the sons of the Levites according to their ancestral houses. ³¹ These also cast lots corresponding to their kindred, the descendants of Aaron, in the presence of King David, Zadok, Ahimelech, and the heads of ancestral houses of the priests and of the Levites, the chief as well as the youngest brother.

^a See 23.19: Heb lacks *Hebron*

^b See 23.19: Heb lacks *the chief*

^c Or *his son*: Meaning of Heb uncertain

Read 1 Chronicles 25

The Chronicler provides a list of twenty-four groups of temple singers. This parallel to the twenty-four groups of priests given in the previous chapter indicates the importance of the singers' responsibilities in temple service. There are several mentions in the text to the temple singers who prophesied to the accompaniment of musical instruments. In a sense, then, the Chronicler gives the temple singers a prophetic role.

Reflect: According to the Chronicler, the temple singers had a role in ancient Israel's worship parallel to that of the Levites and priests. What does this imply about the importance of music in worship?

Pray: Pray for the musicians in your worshiping community—people who not only share their talents with your community but also add beauty to its worship.

Act: Join the choir! Stand in that long line of people going back to the days of the Jerusalem temple who contribute to the worship of the community by singing.

The Temple Musicians

25 David and the officers of the army also set apart for the service the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with lyres, harps, and cymbals. The list of those who did the work and of their duties was: ² Of the sons of Asaph: Zaccur, Joseph, Nethaniah, and Asarelah, sons of Asaph, under the direction of Asaph, who prophesied under the direction of the king. ³ Of Jeduthun, the sons of Jeduthun: Gedaliah, Zeri, Jeshaiiah, Shimei,^a Hashabiah, and Mattithiah, six, under the direction of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied with the lyre in thanksgiving and praise to the LORD. ⁴ Of Heman, the sons of Heman: Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shebuel, and Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti, and Romamti-ezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, Mahazioth. ⁵ All these were the sons of Heman the king's seer, according to the promise of God to exalt him; for God had given Heman fourteen sons and three daughters. ⁶ They were all under the direction of their father for the music in the house of the LORD with cymbals, harps, and lyres for the service of the house of God. Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman were under the order of the king. ⁷ They and their kindred, who were trained in singing to the LORD, all of whom were skillful, numbered two hundred eighty-eight. ⁸ And they cast lots for their duties, small and great, teacher and pupil alike.

⁹ The first lot fell for Asaph to Joseph; the second to Gedaliah, to him and his brothers and his sons, twelve; ¹⁰ the third to Zaccur, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ¹¹ the fourth to Izri, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ¹² the fifth to Nethaniah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ¹³ the sixth to Bukkiah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ¹⁴ the seventh to Jesarelah,^b his sons and his brothers, twelve; ¹⁵ the eighth to Jeshaiiah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ¹⁶ the ninth to Mattaniah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ¹⁷ the tenth to Shimei, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ¹⁸ the eleventh to Azarel, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ¹⁹ the twelfth to Hashabiah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ²⁰ to the thirteenth, Shubael, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ²¹ to the fourteenth, Mattithiah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ²² to the fifteenth, to Jeremoth, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ²³ to the sixteenth, to Hananiah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ²⁴ to the seventeenth, to Joshbekashah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ²⁵ to the eighteenth, to Hanani, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ²⁶ to the nineteenth, to Mallothi, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ²⁷ to the twentieth, to Eliathah, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ²⁸ to the twenty-first, to Hothir, his sons and his brothers,

^a One Ms: Gk: MT lacks *Shimei*

^b Or *Asarelah*; see 25.2

ers, twelve; ²⁹ to the twenty-second, to Gid-dalti, his sons and his brothers, twelve; ³⁰ to the twenty-third, to Mahazioth, his sons and

his brothers, twelve; ³¹ to the twenty-fourth, to Romamti-ezer, his sons and his brothers, twelve.

Read 1 Chronicles 26:1–28

The Chronicler has David provide for the care of the temple precincts and its treasuries. Several Levitical families were assigned as gatekeepers and treasurers. Temples in the ancient Near East were not just settings for worship. They were political, economic, and social institutions as well. This passage is an indication that simply providing personnel for the worship services was not enough to ensure that the temple would operate efficiently.

Reflect: Like the temple, the contemporary parish does more than provide a place for worship. It is an educational institution and a social welfare institution. To fulfill its complex mission, the parish needs personnel and financial resources beyond what is necessary for the liturgy. How acquainted are you with parish activities and the personnel required to support these? Do you make your contribution of time and talent to such activities?

Pray: The parish needs many people with diverse talents to fulfill its mission. Pray for the paid and volunteer staff of your faith community.

Act: Resolve to lend your voice, talents, and time to help your parish serve the Christian faithful.

The Gatekeepers

26 As for the divisions of the gatekeepers: of the Korahites, Meshelemiah son of Kore, of the sons of Asaph. ² Meshelemiah had sons: Zechariah the first-born, Jedaiel the second, Zebadiah the third, Jathniel the fourth, ³ Elam the fifth, Jehohanan the sixth, Eliehoenai the seventh. ⁴ Obed-edom had sons: Shemaiah the firstborn, Jehozabad the second, Joah the third, Sachar the fourth, Nethanel the fifth, ⁵ Ammiel the sixth, Issachar the seventh, Peullethai the eighth; for God blessed him. ⁶ Also to his son Shemaiah sons were born who exercised authority in their ancestral houses, for they were men of great ability. ⁷ The sons of Shemaiah: Othni, Rephael, Obed, and Elzabad, whose brothers were able men, Elihu and Semachiah. ⁸ All these, sons of Obed-edom with their sons and brothers, were able men qualified for the service; sixty-two of Obed-edom. ⁹ Meshelemiah had sons and brothers, able men, eighteen. ¹⁰ Hosah, of the sons of Merari, had sons: Shimri the chief (for though he was not the first-born, his father made him chief), ¹¹ Hilkiyah the second, Tebaliah the third, Zechariah the fourth: all the sons and brothers of Hosah totaled thirteen.

¹² These divisions of the gatekeepers, corresponding to their leaders, had duties, just as their kindred did, ministering in the house of the LORD; ¹³ and they cast lots by ancestral houses, small and great alike, for their gates. ¹⁴ The lot for the east fell to Shelemiah. They cast lots also for his son Zechariah, a prudent counselor, and his lot came out for the north. ¹⁵ Obed-edom's came out for the south, and to his sons was allotted the storehouse. ¹⁶ For Shuppim and Hosah it came out for the west, at the gate of Shallecheth on the ascending road. Guard corresponded to guard. ¹⁷ On the east there were six Levites each day,^a on the north four each day, on the south four each day, as well as two and two at the storehouse; ¹⁸ and for the colonnade^b on the west there were four at the road and two at the colonnade.^b ¹⁹ These were the divisions of the gatekeepers among the Korahites and the sons of Merari.

The Treasurers, Officers, and Judges

²⁰ And of the Levites, Ahijah had charge of the treasuries of the house of God and the treasuries of the dedicated gifts. ²¹ The sons of Ladan, the sons of

^a Gk: Heb lacks *each day*

^b Heb *parbar*: meaning uncertain

Read 1 Chronicles 26:29—27:34

In addition to providing for the temple, David also organizes the civil administration of his kingdom. He appoints magistrates, army commanders, and people to oversee the farm land owned by the crown. The text suggests that, despite the emergence of the monarchy, the tribal structure still survives. Finally, the text concludes with the naming of David's inner circle of advisers.

Reflect: The Bible attends to political, social, and economic matters. It is not focused solely on the religious sphere. What is your attitude toward social, political, and economic issues? Do you see the importance of the involvement of the Christian faithful in these areas?

Pray: Pray that Christians can effectively apply gospel values in helping to shape our society.

Act: Take steps to learn about the religious values that ought to inform our nation's civil life and its laws.

the Gershonites belonging to Ladan, the heads of families belonging to Ladan the Gershonite: Jehieli.^a

22 The sons of Jehieli, Zetham and his brother Joel, were in charge of the treasuries of the house of the LORD. ²³ Of the Amramites, the Izharites, the Hebronites, and the Uzzielites: ²⁴ Shebuel son of Gershom, son of Moses, was chief officer in charge of the treasuries. ²⁵ His brothers: from Eliezer were his son Rehabiah, his son Jeshaiiah, his son Joram, his son Zichri, and his son Shelomoth. ²⁶ This Shelomoth and his brothers were in charge of all the treasuries of the dedicated gifts that King David, and the heads of families, and the officers of the thousands and the hundreds, and the commanders of the army, had dedicated. ²⁷ From booty won in battles they dedicated gifts for the maintenance of the house of the LORD. ²⁸ Also all that Samuel the seer, and Saul son of Kish, and Abner son of Ner, and Joab son of Zeruiah had dedicated—all dedicated gifts were in the care of Shelomoth^b and his brothers.

29 Of the Izharites, Chenaniah and his sons were appointed to outside duties for Israel, as officers and judges. ³⁰ Of the Hebronites, Hashabiah and his brothers, one thousand seven hundred men of ability, had the oversight of Israel west of the Jordan for all the work of the LORD and for the service of the king. ³¹ Of the Hebronites, Jerijah was chief of the Hebronites. (In the fortieth year of David's reign search was made, of whatever genealogy or family, and men of great ability among them were found at Jazer in Gilead.) ³² King David appointed him and his brothers, two thousand seven hundred men of ability, heads of families, to have the oversight of the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of the Manassites for everything pertaining to God and for the affairs of the king.

The Military Divisions

27 This is the list of the people of Israel, the heads of families, the commanders of the thousands and the hundreds, and their officers who served the king in all matters concerning the divisions that came and went, month after month throughout the year, each division numbering twenty-four thousand:

2 Jashobeam son of Zabdiel was in charge of the first division in the first month; in his division were twenty-four thousand. ³ He was a descendant of Perez, and was chief of all the commanders of the army for the first month. ⁴ Dodai the Ahohite was in charge of the division of the second month; Mikloth was the chief officer of his division. In his division were twenty-four thousand. ⁵ The third commander, for the third month, was Benaiah son of the priest Jehoiada, as chief; in his divi-

^a The Hebrew text of verse 21 is confused

^b Gk Compare 26.28: Heb *Shelomith*

sion were twenty-four thousand. ⁶ This is the Benaiah who was a mighty man of the Thirty and in command of the Thirty; his son Ammizabad was in charge of his division.^a ⁷ Asahel brother of Joab was fourth, for the fourth month, and his son Zebadiah after him; in his division were twenty-four thousand. ⁸ The fifth commander, for the fifth month, was Shamhuth, the Izrahite; in his division were twenty-four thousand. ⁹ Sixth, for the sixth month, was Ira son of Ikkesh the Tekoite; in his division were twenty-four thousand. ¹⁰ Seventh, for the seventh month, was Helez the Pelonite, of the Ephraimites; in his division were twenty-four thousand. ¹¹ Eighth, for the eighth month, was Sibbecai the Hushathite, of the Zerahites; in his division were twenty-four thousand. ¹² Ninth, for the ninth month, was Abiezer of Anathoth, a Benjaminite; in his division were twenty-four thousand. ¹³ Tenth, for the tenth month, was Maharai of Netophah, of the Zerahites; in his division were twenty-four thousand. ¹⁴ Eleventh, for the eleventh month, was Benaiah of Pirathon, of the Ephraimites; in his division were twenty-four thousand. ¹⁵ Twelfth, for the twelfth month, was Heldai the Netophathite, of Othniel; in his division were twenty-four thousand.

Leaders of Tribes

¹⁶ Over the tribes of Israel, for the Reubenites, Eliezer son of Zichri was chief officer; for the Simeonites, Shephatiah son of Maacah; ¹⁷ for Levi, Hashabiah son of Kemuel; for Aaron, Zadok; ¹⁸ for Judah, Elihu, one of David's brothers; for Issachar, Omri son of Michael; ¹⁹ for Zebulun, Ishmaiah son of Obadiah; for Naphtali, Jerimoth son of Azriel; ²⁰ for the Ephraimites, Hoshea son of Azaziah; for the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joel son of Pedaiah; ²¹ for the

half-tribe of Manasseh in Gilead, Iddo son of Zechariah; for Benjamin, Jaasiel son of Abner; ²² for Dan, Azarel son of Jeroham. These were the leaders of the tribes of Israel. ²³ David did not count those below twenty years of age, for the LORD had promised to make Israel as numerous as the stars of heaven. ²⁴ Joab son of Zeruiah began to count them, but did not finish; yet wrath came upon Israel for this, and the number was not entered into the account of the Annals of King David.

Other Civic Officials

²⁵ Over the king's treasuries was Azmaveth son of Adiel. Over the treasuries in the country, in the cities, in the villages and in the towers, was Jonathan son of Uziah. ²⁶ Over those who did the work of the field, tilling the soil, was Ezri son of Chelub. ²⁷ Over the vineyards was Shimei the Ramathite. Over the produce of the vineyards for the wine cellars was Zabdi the Shiphmite. ²⁸ Over the olive and sycamore trees in the Shephelah was Baal-hanan the Gederite. Over the stores of oil was Joash. ²⁹ Over the herds that pastured in Sharon was Shitrai the Sharonite. Over the herds in the valleys was Shaphat son of Adlai. ³⁰ Over the camels was Obil the Ishmaelite. Over the donkeys was Jehdeiah the Meronothite. Over the flocks was Jaziz the Hagrite. ³¹ All these were stewards of King David's property.

³² Jonathan, David's uncle, was a counselor, being a man of understanding and a scribe; Jehiel son of Hachmoni attended the king's sons. ³³ Ahithophel was the king's counselor, and Hushai the Archite was the king's friend. ³⁴ After Ahithophel came Jehoiada son of Benaiah, and Abiathar. Joab was commander of the king's army.

Solomon Instructed to Build the Temple

28 David assembled at Jerusalem all the officials of Israel, the officials of the tribes, the officers of the divisions that served the king, the commanders of the thousands, the commanders of the hundreds, the stewards of all the property and cattle of the king and

^a Gk Vg: Heb Ammizabad was his division

Read 1 Chronicles 28:1–10

The first book of Kings describes a struggle between Adonijah and Solomon for David's throne. The Chronicler, however, simply tells a story of Solomon's designation by David as his successor and the person who will build the temple. After announcing this to the leaders of the kingdom, David advises them to obey the commandments and then exhorts his son and successor to seek God and to begin work on the temple.

Reflect: David's advice to Israel's leaders to obey the commandments and his urging of Solomon to seek God are as meaningful today as they were millennia ago. An authentic Christian life is marked by a commitment to God's law. Consider carefully the criteria you use to evaluate the status of your relationship with God.

Pray: David counsels Solomon to seek the Lord. If we wish to have an authentic experience of God, we first must seek the Lord in prayer.

Act: Examine your commitment to a consistent discipline of prayer. Make seeking the Lord a regular component of your daily life.

his sons, together with the palace officials, the mighty warriors, and all the warriors.² Then King David rose to his feet and said: "Hear me, my brothers and my people. I had planned to build a house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, for the footstool of our God; and I made preparations for building."³ But God said to me, 'You shall not build a house for my name, for you are a warrior and have shed blood.'⁴ Yet the LORD God of Israel chose me from all my ancestral house to be king over Israel forever; for he chose Judah as leader, and in the house of Judah my father's house, and among my father's sons he took delight in making me king over all Israel.⁵ And of all my sons, for the LORD has given me many, he has chosen my son Solomon to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel.⁶ He said to me, 'It is your son Solomon who shall build my house and my courts, for I have chosen him to be a son to me, and I will be a father to him.'⁷ I will establish his kingdom forever if he continues resolute in keeping my commandments and my ordinances, as he is today.'⁸ Now therefore in the sight of all Israel, the assembly of the LORD, and in the hearing of our God, observe and search out all the commandments of the LORD your God; that you may possess this good land, and leave it for an inheritance to your children after you forever.

⁹ "And you, my son Solomon, know the God of your father, and serve him with single mind and willing heart; for the LORD searches every mind, and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you; but if you forsake him, he will abandon you forever."¹⁰ Take heed now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a house as the sanctuary; be strong, and act."

¹¹ Then David gave his son Solomon the plan of the vestibule of the temple, and of its houses, its treasuries, its upper rooms, and its inner chambers, and of the room for the mercy seat;^a ¹² and the plan of all that he had in mind: for the courts of the house of the LORD, all the surrounding chambers, the treasuries of the house of God, and the treasuries for dedicated gifts;¹³ for the divisions of the priests and of the Levites, and all the work of the service in the house of the LORD; for all the vessels for the service in the house of the LORD, ¹⁴ the weight of gold for all golden vessels for each service, the weight of silver vessels for each service, ¹⁵ the weight of the golden lampstands and their lamps, the weight of gold for each lampstand and its lamps, the weight of silver for a lampstand and its lamps, according to the use of each in the service, ¹⁶ the weight of gold for each table for the rows of bread, the silver for the silver tables,

^a Or the cover

Read 1 Chronicles 28:11–21

The Chronicler credits David with doing everything to establish the worship of God in Jerusalem except for the actual construction of the temple. Here David hands over to Solomon the plans he has prepared for that construction and for the various liturgical vessels to be used in the temple. He encourages Solomon to go to work on completing the construction of the temple.

Reflect: David warns Solomon not to become discouraged. After all, the construction of the temple will be a massive project requiring careful coordination of efforts. A lot of things might go wrong. Does discouragement sometimes lead you to abandon a good work inspired by the Spirit? Consider how much good is left undone because of discouragement.

Pray: Ask God to bring to perfection the good work that the Spirit has inspired you to undertake. Prayer is a powerful antidote to discouragement.

Act: Encourage your children to remain committed to the gospel. The best way to do this is to model such commitment in your own life.

¹⁷ and pure gold for the forks, the basins, and the cups; for the golden bowls and the weight of each; for the silver bowls and the weight of each; ¹⁸ for the altar of incense made of refined gold, and its weight; also his plan for the golden chariot of the cherubim that spread their wings and covered the ark of the covenant of the LORD.

¹⁹ “All this, in writing at the LORD’s direction, he made clear to me—the plan of all the works.”

²⁰ David said further to his son Solomon, “Be strong and of good courage, and act. Do not be afraid or dismayed; for the LORD God, my God, is with you. He will not fail you or forsake you, until all the work for the service of the house of the LORD is finished. ²¹ Here are the divisions of the priests and the Levites for all the service of the house of God; and with you in all the work will be every volunteer who has skill for any kind of service; also the officers and all the people will be wholly at your command.”

Offerings for Building the Temple

29 King David said to the whole assembly, “My son Solomon, whom alone God has chosen, is young and inexperienced, and the work is great; for the temple^a will not be for mortals but for the LORD God. ² So I have provided for the house of my God, so far as I was able, the gold for the things of gold, the silver for the things of silver, and the bronze for the things of bronze, the iron for the things of iron, and wood for the things of wood, besides great quantities of onyx and stones for setting, antimony, colored stones, all sorts of precious stones, and marble in abundance. ³ Moreover, in addition to all that I have provided for the holy house, I have a treasure of my own of gold and silver, and because of my devotion to the house of my God I give it to the house of my God: ⁴ three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, for overlaying the walls of the house, ⁵ and for all the work to be done by artisans, gold for the things of gold and silver for the things of silver. Who then will offer willingly, consecrating themselves today to the LORD?”

⁶ Then the leaders of ancestral houses made their freewill offerings, as did also the leaders of the tribes, the commanders of the thousands and of the hundreds, and the officers over the king’s work. ⁷ They gave for the service of the house of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. ⁸ Whoever had precious stones gave them to the treasury of the house of

^a Heb fortress

Read 1 Chronicles 29:1–9

The building of the temple was a costly venture. David donated a large part of his own wealth to the temple and the people of means in Israel followed his example. The Chronicler makes clear that the building of the temple was the result of generous financial support from people who could afford to make substantial gifts.

Reflect: The Christian faithful are to share not only their gifts of time and talent but also their financial resources with the Christian community. This enables the church to carry out its missionary activity, its charitable works, and its program of evangelization as well as to pay staff people and maintain buildings. How do you rate your generosity to the church?

Pray: Thank God for inspiring people of means to support the church and its ministries.

Act: Inspired by David's example of generosity, carefully consider the financial contribution you can make to supporting the church and its ministries.

Read 1 Chronicles 29:10–22a

The Chronicler concludes his flattering portrait of David in the best possible way: he has David, standing in the midst of the worshipping community, offering a most beautiful prayer. The Chronicler can think of no better way to end his story of David than by having the king command his people to "bless the LORD."

Reflect: David's prayer reflects on the generous response of the people to the project of building the temple. American Catholics have been very generous in their support of the church and its ministries. Do you think this pattern of generosity will continue? What areas of church life and ministry do you think need the most help?

the LORD, into the care of Jehiel the Gershonite. ⁹ Then the people rejoiced because these had given willingly, for with single mind they had offered freely to the LORD; King David also rejoiced greatly.

David's Praise to God

10 Then David blessed the LORD in the presence of all the assembly; David said: "Blessed are you, O LORD, the God of our ancestor Israel, forever and ever. ¹¹ Yours, O LORD, are the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heavens and on the earth is yours; yours is the kingdom, O LORD, and you are exalted as head above all. ¹² Riches and honor come from you, and you rule over all. In your hand are power and might; and it is in your hand to make great and to give strength to all. ¹³ And now, our God, we give thanks to you and praise your glorious name.

14 "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to make this freewill offering? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you. ¹⁵ For we are aliens and transients before you, as were all our ancestors; our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no hope. ¹⁶ O LORD our God, all this abundance that we have provided for building you a house for your holy name comes from your hand and is all your own. ¹⁷ I know, my God, that you search the heart, and take pleasure in uprightness; in the uprightness of my heart I have freely offered all these things, and now I have seen your people, who are present here, offering freely and joyously to you. ¹⁸ O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our ancestors, keep forever such purposes and thoughts in the hearts of your people, and direct their hearts toward you. ¹⁹ Grant to my son Solomon that with single mind he may keep your commandments, your decrees, and your statutes, performing all of them, and that he may build the temple^a for which I have made provision."

20 Then David said to the whole assembly, "Bless the LORD your God." And all the assembly blessed the LORD, the God of their ancestors, and bowed their heads and prostrated themselves before the LORD and the king. ²¹ On the next day they offered sacrifices and burnt offerings to the LORD, a thousand bulls, a thousand rams, and a thousand lambs, with their libations, and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel; ²² and they ate and drank before the LORD on that day with great joy.

Solomon Anointed King

They made David's son Solomon king a second time; they anointed him as the LORD's prince, and

^a Heb *fortress*

Pray: Ask God to continue inspiring the generosity of American Catholics in supporting the church.

Act: Encourage children and young people to set aside some of the money available to them for the good of the church and those in need.

Read 1 Chronicles 29:22b–30

The final component of the two-day celebration during which David acclaimed God's majesty and the people's generosity is a second acclamation of Solomon as David's designated successor. According to the Chronicler, no one disputes Solomon's accession, which God ratifies by giving Solomon a glorious reign. Then the text takes note of David's death and advises interested readers of where they might find more information about David's reign.

Reflect: The Chronicler's story of David certainly paints an idealized portrait of the king. It is a picture of how Israel came to remember David. Shouldn't we follow that example by remembering the good done by those who have gone before us and forgetting the ways in which they may have demonstrated human weakness?

Pray: We ought to remember in prayer those who have gone before us, thanking God for the good they have done and asking God to be merciful to them.

Act: Make a visit to the cemetery where your relatives and friends are buried. Remember all the good they did for you and pray for the repose of their souls.

Zadok as priest. ²³ Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD, succeeding his father David as king; he prospered, and all Israel obeyed him. ²⁴ All the leaders and the mighty warriors, and also all the sons of King David, pledged their allegiance to King Solomon. ²⁵ The LORD highly exalted Solomon in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him such royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel.

Summary of David's Reign

²⁶ Thus David son of Jesse reigned over all Israel. ²⁷ The period that he reigned over Israel was forty years; he reigned seven years in Hebron, and thirty-three years in Jerusalem. ²⁸ He died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honor; and his son Solomon succeeded him. ²⁹ Now the acts of King David, from first to last, are written in the records of the seer Samuel, and in the records of the prophet Nathan, and in the records of the seer Gad, ³⁰ with accounts of all his rule and his might and of the events that befell him and Israel and all the kingdoms of the earth.

2 CHRONICLES

Solomon Requests Wisdom

Read 2 Chronicles 1:1–6

The Chronicler portrays Solomon as devoted to the proper worship of the Lord. The new king begins his reign by bringing together the leaders of the Judahite state for worship at Gibeon. This act serves to legitimize Solomon's rule by connecting the king with the Mosaic tradition. Continuity with Judah's ancestral religious traditions is a principal concern of the chronicler.

Reflect: Am I familiar with the theological and spiritual traditions of my faith? Do I appreciate the importance of connecting with the past?

Pray: Thank God for the words and example of our ancestors in the faith. Pray that you may do in our day what they did in theirs, namely to make God's word a vital force in our world.

Act: Become familiar with a Catholic theological and spiritual tradition that you do not know. Learn that tradition's particular approach to the gospel message. Look for ways in which the church's tradition can shed light on contemporary Christian existence.

Read 2 Chronicles 1:7–12

The text implies that Solomon's encounter with God took place while he was asleep at Gibeon. Although ancient Israel considered dreams as a legitimate form of divine-human communication, the passage is concerned less with how God communicated with Solomon and more with the content of that communication. Biblical tradition associates Solomon with wisdom. This passage describes how and why Solomon acquired wisdom.

1 Solomon son of David established himself in his kingdom; the LORD his God was with him and made him exceedingly great.

2 Solomon summoned all Israel, the commanders of the thousands and of the hundreds, the judges, and all the leaders of all Israel, the heads of families. ³ Then Solomon, and the whole assembly with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon; for God's tent of meeting, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness, was there. ⁴ (But David had brought the ark of God up from Kiriath-jearim to the place that David had prepared for it; for he had pitched a tent for it in Jerusalem.) ⁵ Moreover the bronze altar that Bezalel son of Uri, son of Hur, had made, was there in front of the tabernacle of the LORD. And Solomon and the assembly inquired at it. ⁶ Solomon went up there to the bronze altar before the LORD, which was at the tent of meeting, and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it.

7 That night God appeared to Solomon, and said to him, "Ask what I should give you." ⁸ Solomon said to God, "You have shown great and steadfast love to my father David, and have made me succeed him as king. ⁹ O LORD God, let your promise to my father David now be fulfilled, for you have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. ¹⁰ Give me now wisdom and knowledge to go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this great people of yours?" ¹¹ God answered Solomon, "Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked for possessions, wealth, honor, or the life of those who hate you, and have not even asked for long life, but have asked for wisdom and knowledge for yourself that you may rule my people over whom I have made you king, ¹² wisdom and knowledge are granted to you. I will also give you riches, possessions, and honor, such as none of the kings had who were before you, and none after you shall have the like." ¹³ So Solomon came from^a the high place at Gibeon, from the tent of meeting, to Jerusalem. And he reigned over Israel.

Solomon's Military and Commercial Activity

14 Solomon gathered together chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses, which he stationed in the chariot cities and with

^a Gk Vg: Heb to

Reflect: What do I ask for in prayer? Is my prayer focused on my needs and wants or do I pray for the needs of others? What do I expect from God's answers to my prayers?

Pray: Ask for the gift of wisdom so that your relationships with others may be based on the values of love and service rather than on power and domination.

Act: Look for ways in which you can be of service to your brothers and sisters. Use the talents you have received from God to build up the people of God rather than to build up yourself.

Read 2 Chronicles 1:13–17

In 2 Chronicles 1:12 God promised Solomon wealth and honor. This passage asserts that God's promise to Solomon was fulfilled from the very beginning of Solomon's reign. The text presents Solomon's wealth as derived from his serving as a conduit for Egyptian arms destined for the Aramean and Hittite kingdoms to the north of Israel. Solomon, then, was an arms merchant.

Reflect: What is the source of my wealth? Does my work contribute to the good of the human family? Are the moral choices that I make in connection with my work informed by gospel values?

Pray: Many American corporations profit from supplying governments with arms that have been used against their own people. Pray that these corporations may get out of the arms business, that American expertise may be used to promote peace rather than war.

Act: Learn about the extent of American involvement in the arms trade. Consider joining Pax Christi and become an instrument of peace by urging an end to American involvement in the arms trade.

the king in Jerusalem. ¹⁵ The king made silver and gold as common in Jerusalem as stone, and he made cedar as plentiful as the sycamore of the Shephelah. ¹⁶ Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and Kue; the king's traders received them from Kue at the prevailing price. ¹⁷ They imported from Egypt, and then exported, a chariot for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for one hundred fifty; so through them these were exported to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Aram.

Preparations for Building the Temple

2^a Solomon decided to build a temple for the name of the LORD, and a royal palace for himself. ^{2b} Solomon conscripted seventy thousand laborers and eighty thousand stonecutters in the hill country, with three thousand six hundred to oversee them.

Alliance with Hiram of Tyre

3 Solomon sent word to King Hiram of Tyre: "Once you dealt with my father David and sent him cedar to build himself a house to live in. ⁴ I am now about to build a house for the name of the LORD my God and dedicate it to him for offering fragrant incense before him, and for the regular offering of the rows of bread, and for burnt offerings morning and evening, on the sabbaths and the new moons and the appointed festivals of the LORD our God, as ordained forever for Israel. ⁵ The house that I am about to build will be great, for our God is greater than other gods. ⁶ But who is able to build him a house, since heaven, even highest heaven, cannot contain him? Who am I to build a house for him, except as a place to make offerings before him? ⁷ So now send me an artisan skilled to work in gold, silver, bronze, and iron, and in purple, crimson, and blue fabrics, trained also in engraving, to join the skilled workers who are with me in Judah and Jerusalem, whom my father David provided. ⁸ Send me also cedar, cypress, and algum timber from Lebanon, for I know that your servants are skilled in cutting Lebanon timber. My servants will work with your servants ⁹ to prepare timber for me in abundance, for the house I am about to build will be great and wonderful. ¹⁰ I will provide for your servants, those who cut the timber, twenty thousand cors of crushed wheat, twenty thousand cors of barley, twenty thousand baths^c of wine, and twenty thousand baths of oil."

11 Then King Hiram of Tyre answered in a letter that he sent to Solomon, "Because the LORD loves his people he has made you king over them." ¹² Hiram also said, "Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who made

^a Ch 1.18 in Heb

^b Ch 2.1 in Heb

^c A Hebrew measure of volume

Read 2 Chronicles 2

Solomon is remembered as the person responsible for having built a temple in Jerusalem. Chapter 2 begins and ends by mentioning the size of the labor force necessary for the project. The core of the chapter, however, deals with Solomon's acquisition of and payment for the building materials needed for the temple. The text notes that the purpose of the temple was to provide a place for sacrificial worship.

Reflect: How much of a community's resources ought to be devoted to the construction of places of worship? Since temple-building was a prerogative of kings, perhaps the building of the Jerusalem temple was an exercise of royal vanity rather than an act of piety. How do we balance a community's need for a place of worship with the needs of poor people, the need to support Catholic education, the obligation to pay church workers a just and living wage?

Pray: With financial resources as limited as they are, pray for the wisdom to know how best to allocate these resources.

Act: Become an active member of your parish council. Learn the needs of your parish community and become a voice advocating a just and reasonable allocation of your parish's financial resources.

heaven and earth, who has given King David a wise son, endowed with discretion and understanding, who will build a temple for the LORD, and a royal palace for himself.

13 "I have dispatched Hiram-abi, a skilled artisan, endowed with understanding, ¹⁴ the son of one of the Danite women, his father a Tyrian. He is trained to work in gold, silver, bronze, iron, stone, and wood, and in purple, blue, and crimson fabrics and fine linen, and to do all sorts of engraving and execute any design that may be assigned him, with your artisans, the artisans of my lord, your father David. ¹⁵ Now, as for the wheat, barley, oil, and wine, of which my lord has spoken, let him send them to his servants. ¹⁶ We will cut whatever timber you need from Lebanon, and bring it to you as rafts by sea to Joppa; you will take it up to Jerusalem."

17 Then Solomon took a census of all the aliens who were residing in the land of Israel, after the census that his father David had taken; and there were found to be one hundred fifty-three thousand six hundred. ¹⁸ Seventy thousand of them he assigned as laborers, eighty thousand as stonecutters in the hill country, and three thousand six hundred as overseers to make the people work.

Solomon Builds the Temple

3 Solomon began to build the house of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David, at the place that David had designated, on the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite. ² He began to build on the second day of the second month of the fourth year of his reign. ³ These are Solomon's measurements^a for building the house of God: the length, in cubits of the old standard, was sixty cubits, and the width twenty cubits. ⁴ The vestibule in front of the nave of the house was twenty cubits long, across the width of the house;^b and its height was one hundred twenty cubits. He overlaid it on the inside with pure gold. ⁵ The nave he lined with cypress, covered it with fine gold, and made palms and chains on it. ⁶ He adorned the house with settings of precious stones. The gold was gold from Parvaim. ⁷ So he lined the house with gold—its beams, its thresholds, its walls, and its doors; and he carved cherubim on the walls.

⁸ He made the most holy place; its length, corresponding to the width of the house, was twenty cubits, and its width was twenty cubits; he overlaid it with six hundred talents of fine gold. ⁹ The weight of the nails was fifty shekels of gold. He overlaid the upper chambers with gold.

10 In the most holy place he made two carved

^a Syr: Heb *foundations*

^b Compare 1 Kings 6.3: Meaning of Heb uncertain

Read 2 Chronicles 3

The Chronicler's account of the building of the temple focuses on the parallels between the temple and the tabernacle that was used during the years of wandering in the wilderness following the Exodus from Egypt. For the Chronicler, it is this continuity with the tabernacle that provides the temple of Jerusalem with its legitimacy as a place of authentic worship.

Reflect: Consider the significance of continuity in the Roman Catholic experience. What separates authentic continuity of tradition from nostalgia? What makes for genuine continuity?

Pray: Let your prayer be an expression of your continuity within the Roman Catholic experience. Pray for an openness to traditional styles of prayer.

Act: Learn how to be comfortable with forms of prayer, such as the Liturgy of the Hours, that reflect continuity with the past.

cherubim and overlaid^a them with gold. ¹¹ The wings of the cherubim together extended twenty cubits: one wing of the one, five cubits long, touched the wall of the house, and its other wing, five cubits long, touched the wing of the other cherub; ¹² and of this cherub, one wing, five cubits long, touched the wall of the house, and the other wing, also five cubits long, was joined to the wing of the first cherub. ¹³ The wings of these cherubim extended twenty cubits; the cherubim^b stood on their feet, facing the nave. ¹⁴ And Solomon^c made the curtain of blue and purple and crimson fabrics and fine linen, and worked cherubim into it.

¹⁵ In front of the house he made two pillars thirty-five cubits high, with a capital of five cubits on the top of each. ¹⁶ He made encircling^d chains and put them on the tops of the pillars; and he made one hundred pomegranates, and put them on the chains. ¹⁷ He set up the pillars in front of the temple, one on the right, the other on the left; the one on the right he called Jachin, and the one on the left, Boaz.

Furnishings of the Temple

4 He made an altar of bronze, twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and ten cubits high. ² Then he made the molten sea; it was round, ten cubits from rim to rim, and five cubits high. A line of thirty cubits would encircle it completely. ³ Under it were panels all around, each of ten cubits, surrounding the sea; there were two rows of panels, cast when it was cast. ⁴ It stood on twelve oxen, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east; the sea was set on them. The hindquarters of each were toward the inside. ⁵ Its thickness was a handbreadth; its rim was made like the rim of a cup, like the flower of a lily; it held three thousand baths.^e ⁶ He also made ten basins in which to wash, and set five on the right side, and five on the left. In these they were to rinse what was used for the burnt offering. The sea was for the priests to wash in.

⁷ He made ten golden lampstands as prescribed, and set them in the temple, five on the south side and five on the north. ⁸ He also made ten tables and placed them in the temple, five on the right side and five on the left. And he made one hundred basins of gold. ⁹ He made the court of the priests, and the great court, and doors for the court; he overlaid their doors with bronze. ¹⁰ He set the sea at the southeast corner of the house.

¹¹ And Hiram made the pots, the shovels, and the basins. Thus Hiram finished the work that he did for King Solomon on the house of God: ¹² the two pillars, the bowls, and the two capitals on the top of the pillars; and the two latticeworks to cover the two bowls of the

^a Heb *they overlaid*

^b Heb *they*

^c Heb *he*

^d Cn: Heb *in the inner sanctuary*

^e A Hebrew measure of volume

Read 2 Chronicles 4:1—5:1

The emphasis on vessels to hold water reflects the character of the sacrificial worship in the temple: it was a very messy affair that required the availability of large amounts of water in order to maintain cleanliness. The lamps of the temple served a utilitarian purpose, but they also symbolized the continuing presence of God. The text also underscores the precious quality of the materials that were used for temple furnishings.

Reflect: How do you acknowledge the sacred character of the church where you gather with your parish community for worship? Do you consider your parish church a “sacred place” that requires from you certain decorum and reverence?

Pray: Thank God for the freedom of worship that you enjoy. Claim your freedom and make of your parish church a genuine “house of prayer.”

Act: In addition to participating in Sunday worship, attend devotional prayer services in your parish church. Allow the church building to be a place of prayer for you. Spend time in silent prayer there.

capitals that were on the top of the pillars; ¹³ the four hundred pomegranates for the two latticeworks, two rows of pomegranates for each latticework, to cover the two bowls of the capitals that were on the pillars. ¹⁴ He made the stands, the basins on the stands, ¹⁵ the one sea, and the twelve oxen underneath it. ¹⁶ The pots, the shovels, the forks, and all the equipment for these Hiram-abi made of burnished bronze for King Solomon for the house of the LORD. ¹⁷ In the plain of the Jordan the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zeredah. ¹⁸ Solomon made all these things in great quantities, so that the weight of the bronze was not determined.

¹⁹ So Solomon made all the things that were in the house of God: the golden altar, the tables for the bread of the Presence, ²⁰ the lampstands and their lamps of pure gold to burn before the inner sanctuary, as prescribed; ²¹ the flowers, the lamps, and the tongs, of purest gold; ²² the snuffers, basins, ladles, and firepans, of pure gold. As for the entrance to the temple: the inner doors to the most holy place and the doors of the nave of the temple were of gold.

5 Thus all the work that Solomon did for the house of the LORD was finished. Solomon brought in the things that his father David had dedicated, and stored the silver, the gold, and all the vessels in the treasuries of the house of God.

The Ark Brought into the Temple

² Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the ancestral houses of the people of Israel, in Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion. ³ And all the Israelites assembled before the king at the festival that is in the seventh month. ⁴ And all the elders of Israel came, and the Levites carried the ark. ⁵ So they brought up the ark, the tent of meeting, and all the holy vessels that were in the tent; the priests and the Levites brought them up. ⁶ King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel, who had assembled before him, were before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and oxen that they could not be numbered or counted. ⁷ Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, in the inner sanctuary of the house, in the most holy place, underneath the wings of the cherubim. ⁸ For the cherubim spread out their wings over the place of the ark, so that the cherubim made a covering above the ark and its poles. ⁹ The poles were so long that the ends of the poles were seen from the holy place in front of the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside; they are there to

Read 2 Chronicles 5:2–14

The bringing of the ark to the temple is another indication of the continuity of the temple with ancient Israel's earlier religious traditions. After all, Israel existed for two hundred years before a temple was built, so this "innovation" had to be justified. It is important to recognize that all Israel participated in the ceremony that brought the ark to the temple (see v. 2).

Reflect: Though conversion is an individual affair, Christianity is not meant to be lived by the individual in isolation. Authentic discipleship expresses itself through engagement in a vibrant community life. How connected are you to your parish community?

Pray: Join the Christian community for prayer so that communal prayer and worship become regular features of your life with God.

Act: Participate actively in Sunday worship, not only by praying and singing with the community but also by serving in a ministry that enhances the worship of the community.

this day. ¹⁰ There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets that Moses put there at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant^a with the people of Israel after they came out of Egypt.

¹¹ Now when the priests came out of the holy place (for all the priests who were present had sanctified themselves, without regard to their divisions), ¹² all the levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, their sons and kindred, arrayed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps, and lyres, stood east of the altar with one hundred twenty priests who were trumpeters. ¹³ It was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to make themselves heard in unison in praise and thanksgiving to the LORD, and when the song was raised, with trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments, in praise to the LORD,

“For he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever,”

the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a cloud, ¹⁴ so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God.

Dedication of the Temple

6 Then Solomon said, “The LORD has said that he would reside in thick darkness. ² I have built you an exalted house, a place for you to reside in forever.”

³ Then the king turned around and blessed all the assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel stood. ⁴ And he said, “Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who with his hand has fulfilled what he promised with his mouth to my father David, saying, ⁵ ‘Since the day that I brought my people out of the land of Egypt, I have not chosen a city from any of the tribes of Israel in which to build a house, so that my name might be there, and I chose no one as ruler over my people Israel; ⁶ but I have chosen Jerusalem in order that my name may be there, and I have chosen David to be over my people Israel.’ ⁷ My father David had it in mind to build a house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. ⁸ But the LORD said to my father David, ‘You did well to consider building a house for my name; ⁹ nevertheless you shall not build the house, but your son who shall be born to you shall build the house for my name.’ ¹⁰ Now the LORD has fulfilled his promise that he made; for I have succeeded my father David, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and have built the house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. ¹¹ There I have set the ark, in which is the covenant of the LORD that he made with the people of Israel.”

^a Heb lacks a covenant

Read 2 Chronicles 6:1–11

Solomon praises God for fulfilling the promises made to David and notes that David responded by determining to build a temple in Jerusalem—the place God has chosen. David, however, was not to build the temple, though God promised him that his son would do so. Solomon regards the completion of the temple and its dedication as the fulfillment of that promise.

Reflect: Are you confident that the promises God made through Jesus Christ will be fulfilled? Do you look forward in hope to the future? Does your faith in the future promised by Christ help shape your present?

Pray: The petitions of the Lord's Prayer focus on the future that the followers of Jesus hope for. Pray the Lord's Prayer slowly, meditating on its petitions. Pray it with the confidence that comes with faith in a God who keeps every promise.

Act: Let your faith in the fulfillment of God's promises give you the confidence to risk everything for the sake of God's reign. Do not be afraid to make the sacrifices necessary to advance the coming of God's rule on earth.

Solomon's Prayer of Dedication

12 Then Solomon^a stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of the whole assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands. ¹³ Solomon had made a bronze platform five cubits long, five cubits wide, and three cubits high, and had set it in the court; and he stood on it. Then he knelt on his knees in the presence of the whole assembly of Israel, and spread out his hands toward heaven. ¹⁴ He said, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven or on earth, keeping covenant in steadfast love with your servants who walk before you with all their heart—¹⁵ you who have kept for your servant, my father David, what you promised to him. Indeed, you promised with your mouth and this day have fulfilled with your hand. ¹⁶ Therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, keep for your servant, my father David, that which you promised him, saying, 'There shall never fail you a successor before me to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your children keep to their way, to walk in my law as you have walked before me.' ¹⁷ Therefore, O LORD, God of Israel, let your word be confirmed, which you promised to your servant David.

18 "But will God indeed reside with mortals on earth? Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, how much less this house that I have built! ¹⁹ Regard your servant's prayer and his plea, O LORD my God, heeding the cry and the prayer that your servant prays to you. ²⁰ May your eyes be open day and night toward this house, the place where you promised to set your name, and may you heed the prayer that your servant prays toward this place. ²¹ And hear the plea of your servant and of your people Israel, when they pray toward this place; may you hear from heaven your dwelling place; hear and forgive.

22 "If someone sins against another and is required to take an oath and comes and swears before your altar in this house, ²³ may you hear from heaven, and act, and judge your servants, repaying the guilty by bringing their conduct on their own head, and vindicating those who are in the right by rewarding them in accordance with their righteousness.

24 "When your people Israel, having sinned against you, are defeated before an enemy but turn again to you, confess your name, pray and plead with you in this house, ²⁵ may you hear from heaven, and forgive the sin of your people Israel, and bring them again to the land that you gave to them and to their ancestors.

26 "When heaven is shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against you, and then they pray toward this place, confess your name, and turn from their sin, because you punish them, ²⁷ may you

^a Heb *he*

Read 2 Chronicles 6:12–42

The prayer of Solomon is based on a new understanding of the temple. It is not simply a place for sacrificial worship. It is a place where all people—not only Israelites—can have an authentic encounter with God in prayer. The effect of this prayer is to prepare Israel for a world without a temple, since prayers need not be offered in the temple but merely while facing in the direction of the temple. The prayer recognizes that God cannot be confined by any human construct.

Reflect: Are you ready to accept a God who cannot be confined by human categories? Despite the time, expense and effort spent on building the temple, Solomon's prayer recognizes that it is prayer—not the temple—that is decisive in the people's relationship with God. The temple has a definite role to play in Israel's religious life, but its role is subordinate to that of prayer.

Pray: Solomon's prayer highlights the importance of prayer in seeking God's forgiveness, God's bounty, deliverance from evil, and restoration to God's favor. These remain important subjects of prayer.

Act: As a way of bringing new enthusiasm to your prayer life, become familiar with a new style of prayer. Make a prayer list to give focus to your prayers of intercession.

hear in heaven, forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel, when you teach them the good way in which they should walk; and send down rain upon your land, which you have given to your people as an inheritance.

28 "If there is famine in the land, if there is plague, blight, mildew, locust, or caterpillar; if their enemies besiege them in any of the settlements of the lands; whatever suffering, whatever sickness there is; ²⁹ whatever prayer, whatever plea from any individual or from all your people Israel, all knowing their own suffering and their own sorrows so that they stretch out their hands toward this house; ³⁰ may you hear from heaven, your dwelling place, forgive, and render to all whose heart you know, according to all their ways, for only you know the human heart. ³¹ Thus may they fear you and walk in your ways all the days that they live in the land that you gave to our ancestors.

32 "Likewise when foreigners, who are not of your people Israel, come from a distant land because of your great name, and your mighty hand, and your outstretched arm, when they come and pray toward this house, ³³ may you hear from heaven your dwelling place, and do whatever the foreigners ask of you, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your people Israel, and that they may know that your name has been invoked on this house that I have built.

34 "If your people go out to battle against their enemies, by whatever way you shall send them, and they pray to you toward this city that you have chosen and the house that I have built for your name, ³⁵ then hear from heaven their prayer and their plea, and maintain their cause.

36 "If they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you are angry with them and give them to an enemy, so that they are carried away captive to a land far or near; ³⁷ then if they come to their senses in the land to which they have been taken captive, and repent, and plead with you in the land of their captivity, saying, 'We have sinned, and have done wrong; we have acted wickedly'; ³⁸ if they repent with all their heart and soul in the land of their captivity, to which they were taken captive, and pray toward their land, which you gave to their ancestors, the city that you have chosen, and the house that I have built for your name, ³⁹ then hear from heaven your dwelling place their prayer and their pleas, maintain their cause and forgive your people who have sinned against you. ⁴⁰ Now, O my God, let your eyes be open and your ears attentive to prayer from this place.

Read 2 Chronicles 7:1–11

The dedication of the temple was a momentous event in the life of ancient Israel. The celebration of this event included all the people and extended over seven days followed by an additional seven days for the observance of the feast of Booths. The number of animals offered (v. 5) is clearly an exaggeration, but it serves to underscore the significance of the event the people of Israel were celebrating.

Reflect: Do you regard participation in the worship of the Christian community as an obligation or a celebration? What do you think of the attempt to solemnize important events in the life of the Christian community?

Pray: The dedication of the temple revolved around giving thanks to God for keeping the promises that God had made to David and to all Israel. Make the prayer of thanksgiving a regular component of your own prayer life. When we Christians gather for the Eucharist (=thanksgiving), we give thanks for what God has done for us in Jesus Christ.

Act: Offer your talents and services to your parish community when it is planning a significant celebration. Participate actively and joyfully.

- 41 “Now rise up, O LORD God, and go to your resting place,
you and the ark of your might.
Let your priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation,
and let your faithful rejoice in your goodness.
- 42 O LORD God, do not reject your anointed one.
Remember your steadfast love for your servant David.”

Solomon Dedicates the Temple

7 When Solomon had ended his prayer, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD filled the temple. ² The priests could not enter the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD filled the LORD’s house. ³ When all the people of Israel saw the fire come down and the glory of the LORD on the temple, they bowed down on the pavement with their faces to the ground, and worshiped and gave thanks to the LORD, saying,

“For he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever.”

⁴ Then the king and all the people offered sacrifice before the LORD. ⁵ King Solomon offered as a sacrifice twenty-two thousand oxen and one hundred twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the people dedicated the house of God. ⁶ The priests stood at their posts; the Levites also, with the instruments for music to the LORD that King David had made for giving thanks to the LORD—for his steadfast love endures forever—whenever David offered praises by their ministry. Opposite them the priests sounded trumpets; and all Israel stood.

⁷ Solomon consecrated the middle of the court that was in front of the house of the LORD; for there he offered the burnt offerings and the fat of the offerings of well-being because the bronze altar Solomon had made could not hold the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat parts.

⁸ At that time Solomon held the festival for seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great congregation, from Lebo-hamath to the Wadi of Egypt. ⁹ On the eighth day they held a solemn assembly; for they had observed the dedication of the altar seven days and the festival seven days. ¹⁰ On the twenty-third day of the seventh month he sent the people away to their homes, joyful and in good spirits because of the goodness that the LORD had shown to David and to Solomon and to his people Israel.

Read 2 Chronicles 7:12–22

In a second appearance to Solomon, God assures the king that prayers offered in the temple will be heard. Also, God reminds Solomon of the consequences that follow the king's moral choices. Obedience brings a blessing and disobedience a curse.

Reflect: Here Solomon is Israel in microcosm. Israel has to make a choice to live according to the divine will. The people's future depends on making the right choice. Have you chosen the way of obedience?

Pray: As important as the community's worship is, the more important determinant of its relationship to God is obedience to the divine will. Pray for the grace of perseverance as you live a life worthy of the gospel.

Act: Be brutally honest with yourself as you assess how faithful you have been in fulfilling the divine will. Resolve to make the kind of moral choices that flow from a commitment to the ideals of the gospel.

11 Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD and the king's house; all that Solomon had planned to do in the house of the LORD and in his own house he successfully accomplished.

God's Second Appearance to Solomon

12 Then the LORD appeared to Solomon in the night and said to him: "I have heard your prayer, and have chosen this place for myself as a house of sacrifice. ¹³When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among my people, ¹⁴if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, pray, seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. ¹⁵Now my eyes will be open and my ears attentive to the prayer that is made in this place. ¹⁶For now I have chosen and consecrated this house so that my name may be there forever; my eyes and my heart will be there for all time. ¹⁷As for you, if you walk before me, as your father David walked, doing according to all that I have commanded you and keeping my statutes and my ordinances, ¹⁸then I will establish your royal throne, as I made covenant with your father David saying, 'You shall never lack a successor to rule over Israel.'

19 "But if you^a turn aside and forsake my statutes and my commandments that I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, ²⁰then I will pluck you^b up from the land that I have given you;^b and this house, which I have consecrated for my name, I will cast out of my sight, and will make it a proverb and a byword among all peoples. ²¹And regarding this house, now exalted, everyone passing by will be astonished, and say, 'Why has the LORD done such a thing to this land and to this house?' ²²Then they will say, 'Because they abandoned the LORD the God of their ancestors who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and they adopted other gods, and worshiped them and served them; therefore he has brought all this calamity upon them.'"

Various Activities of Solomon

8 At the end of twenty years, during which Solomon had built the house of the LORD and his own house, ²Solomon rebuilt the cities that Hiram had given to him, and settled the people of Israel in them.

³Solomon went to Hamath-zobah, and captured it. ⁴He built Tadmor in the wilderness and all the storage towns that he built in Hamath. ⁵He also built Upper Beth-horon and Lower Beth-horon, fortified cities, with

^a The word *you* in this verse is plural

^b Heb *them*

Read 2 Chronicles 8

The Chronicler presents Solomon's achievements as an example of how commitment to the Lord brings blessings. The king's building projects, his military success, his commercial activity are all evidence of God's blessing on obedience. Conformity with the Torah brings the king success in his endeavors.

Reflect: Living the ideals of the gospel will build up the community. Does your life make a positive contribution to the Christian community to which you belong? Do you recognize the importance of your contribution to enhancing the community's welfare?

Pray: Pray that the Lord will bless his people with peace and prosperity, remembering that these blessings are effects of lives committed to the Lord's values.

Act: Look to what positive contributions you can make to the life of your community. It is important that people experience Christians as blessings in their lives. What blessing does your community need most? Decide to do something to bring that blessing on your community.

walls, gates, and bars, ⁶ and Baalath, as well as all Solomon's storage towns, and all the towns for his chariots, the towns for his cavalry, and whatever Solomon desired to build, in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion. ⁷ All the people who were left of the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, who were not of Israel, ⁸ from their descendants who were still left in the land, whom the people of Israel had not destroyed—these Solomon conscripted for forced labor, as is still the case today. ⁹ But of the people of Israel Solomon made no slaves for his work; they were soldiers, and his officers, the commanders of his chariotry and cavalry. ¹⁰ These were the chief officers of King Solomon, two hundred fifty of them, who exercised authority over the people.

11 Solomon brought Pharaoh's daughter from the city of David to the house that he had built for her, for he said, "My wife shall not live in the house of King David of Israel, for the places to which the ark of the LORD has come are holy."

12 Then Solomon offered up burnt offerings to the LORD on the altar of the LORD that he had built in front of the vestibule, ¹³ as the duty of each day required, offering according to the commandment of Moses for the sabbaths, the new moons, and the three annual festivals—the festival of unleavened bread, the festival of weeks, and the festival of booths. ¹⁴ According to the ordinance of his father David, he appointed the divisions of the priests for their service, and the Levites for their offices of praise and ministry alongside the priests as the duty of each day required, and the gatekeepers in their divisions for the several gates; for so David the man of God had commanded. ¹⁵ They did not turn away from what the king had commanded the priests and Levites regarding anything at all, or regarding the treasures.

16 Thus all the work of Solomon was accomplished from^a the day the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid until the house of the LORD was finished completely.

17 Then Solomon went to Ezion-geber and Eloth on the shore of the sea, in the land of Edom. ¹⁸ Hiram sent him, in the care of his servants, ships and servants familiar with the sea. They went to Ophir, together with the servants of Solomon, and imported from there four hundred fifty talents of gold and brought it to King Solomon.

Visit of the Queen of Sheba

9 When the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to Jerusalem to test him with

^a Gk Syr Vg; Heb to

Read 2 Chronicles 9:1–28

The story of the visit by the queen of Sheba to the court of Solomon illustrates the significance of Israel in the political and economic networks of the ancient Near East. It is important to recognize that this story was written when Israel no longer had any importance in the region. Notice that in the queen's address to Solomon, she speaks of God setting Solomon on God's throne (v. 8). Here the Chronicler professes faith in Israel's future, for God will continue to rule even if there is no human king.

Reflect: The queen of Sheba recognized Solomon's achievements as a manifestation of God's power. Are you discerning enough to see the presence and power of God in the world? Have you faith in that power and presence though it may not be apparent?

Pray: Remember those who can see only the absence rather than the presence of God in the world. Ask God to give them faith in Christ's victory over evil and death.

Act: Jesus calls his followers to let their light shine before all, so that, seeing their good works, they may give glory to God (see Mt 5:16). Take an active role in the life of your community and let the gospel guide the choices you make.

hard questions, having a very great retinue and camels bearing spices and very much gold and precious stones. When she came to Solomon, she discussed with him all that was on her mind. ² Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing hidden from Solomon that he could not explain to her. ³ When the queen of Sheba had observed the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, ⁴ the food of his table, the seating of his officials, and the attendance of his servants, and their clothing, his valets, and their clothing, and his burnt offerings^a that he offered at the house of the LORD, there was no more spirit left in her.

⁵ So she said to the king, "The report was true that I heard in my own land of your accomplishments and of your wisdom, ⁶ but I did not believe the^b reports until I came and my own eyes saw it. Not even half of the greatness of your wisdom had been told to me; you far surpass the report that I had heard. ⁷ Happy are your people! Happy are these your servants, who continually attend you and hear your wisdom! ⁸ Blessed be the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and set you on his throne as king for the LORD your God. Because your God loved Israel and would establish them forever, he has made you king over them, that you may execute justice and righteousness." ⁹ Then she gave the king one hundred twenty talents of gold, a very great quantity of spices, and precious stones: there were no spices such as those that the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.

¹⁰ Moreover the servants of Hiram and the servants of Solomon who brought gold from Ophir brought al-gum wood and precious stones. ¹¹ From the al-gum wood, the king made steps^c for the house of the LORD and for the king's house, lyres also and harps for the singers; there never was seen the like of them before in the land of Judah.

¹² Meanwhile King Solomon granted the queen of Sheba every desire that she expressed, well beyond what she had brought to the king. Then she returned to her own land, with her servants.

Solomon's Great Wealth

¹³ The weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred sixty-six talents of gold, ¹⁴ besides that which the traders and merchants brought; and all the kings of Arabia and the governors of the land brought gold and silver to Solomon. ¹⁵ King Solomon made two hundred large shields of beaten gold; six hundred shekels of beaten gold went into each large shield. ¹⁶ He made three hundred shields of beaten gold; three hundred shekels of gold went into each shield; and the

^a Gk Syr Vg 1 Kings 10.5: Heb *ascent*

^b Heb *their*

^c Gk Vg: Meaning of Heb uncertain

Read 2 Chronicles 9:29—10:19

The Bible presents the existence of the two Israelite kingdoms having resulted from a revolt against the Davidic dynasty led by Jeroboam. The revolt brought to the fore the simmering economic difficulties faced by Israel. The Chronicler notes that the rebellion was prophesied by Ahijah. Rehoboam's refusal to ease the economic burdens of his people led to the rejection of his rule by most of the people.

Reflect: Economic justice is a moral value that the church has consistently upheld, particularly in the last two centuries. When the demands of justice are not met, disaster invariably follows. Do you think of the struggle for economic justice as a religious duty? Do you think the economy is a matter best left to secular authorities or do you see it as a concern for believers?

Pray: The struggle for economic justice is not an easy one. Pray for those who take the side of poor people against entrenched powers that keep them in subjection.

Act: The lifestyle of Americans is built upon unjust wages given to foreign workers. Invest in companies that are committed to justice for their workers. Buy goods from companies that do not oppress their workers.

king put them in the House of the Forest of Lebanon. ¹⁷ The king also made a great ivory throne, and overlaid it with pure gold. ¹⁸ The throne had six steps and a footstool of gold, which were attached to the throne, and on each side of the seat were arm rests and two lions standing beside the arm rests, ¹⁹ while twelve lions were standing, one on each end of a step on the six steps. The like of it was never made in any kingdom. ²⁰ All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold; silver was not considered as anything in the days of Solomon. ²¹ For the king's ships went to Tarshish with the servants of Hiram; once every three years the ships of Tarshish used to come bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.^a

²² Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. ²³ All the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind. ²⁴ Every one of them brought a present, objects of silver and gold, garments, weaponry, spices, horses, and mules, so much year by year. ²⁵ Solomon had four thousand stalls for horses and chariots, and twelve thousand horses, which he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem. ²⁶ He ruled over all the kings from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt. ²⁷ The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stone, and cedar as plentiful as the sycamore of the Shephelah. ²⁸ Horses were imported for Solomon from Egypt and from all lands.

Death of Solomon

²⁹ Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, from first to last, are they not written in the history of the prophet Nathan, and in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of the seer Iddo concerning Jeroboam son of Nebat? ³⁰ Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years. ³¹ Solomon slept with his ancestors and was buried in the city of his father David; and his son Rehoboam succeeded him.

The Revolt against Rehoboam

10 Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king. ² When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard of it (for he was in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), then Jeroboam returned from Egypt. ³ They sent and called him; and Jeroboam and all Israel came and said to Rehoboam, ⁴ "Your father made our yoke heavy. Now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke that he placed on us, and we will serve you." ⁵ He

^a Or *baboons*

said to them, "Come to me again in three days." So the people went away.

6 Then King Rehoboam took counsel with the older men who had attended his father Solomon while he was still alive, saying, "How do you advise me to answer this people?" 7 They answered him, "If you will be kind to this people and please them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever." 8 But he rejected the advice that the older men gave him, and consulted the young men who had grown up with him and now attended him. 9 He said to them, "What do you advise that we answer this people who have said to me, 'Lighten the yoke that your father put on us?'" 10 The young men who had grown up with him said to him, "Thus should you speak to the people who said to you, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you must lighten it for us'; tell them, 'My little finger is thicker than my father's loins. 11 Now, whereas my father laid on you a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.'"

12 So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had said, "Come to me again the third day." 13 The king answered them harshly. King Rehoboam rejected the advice of the

older men; 14 he spoke to them in accordance with the advice of the young men, "My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to it; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions." 15 So the king did not listen to the people, because it was a turn of affairs brought about by God so that the LORD might fulfill his word, which he had spoken by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam son of Nebat.

16 When all Israel saw that the king would not listen to them, the people answered the king,

"What share do we have in David?

We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse.

Each of you to your tents, O Israel!
Look now to your own house,
O David."

So all Israel departed to their tents. 17 But Rehoboam reigned over the people of Israel who were living in the cities of Judah. 18 When King Rehoboam sent Hadoram, who was taskmaster over the forced labor, the people of Israel stoned him to death. King Rehoboam hurriedly mounted his chariot to flee to Jerusalem. 19 So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.

Judah and Benjamin Fortified

11 When Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he assembled one hundred eighty thousand chosen troops of the house of Judah and Benjamin to fight against Israel, to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam. 2 But the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah the man of God: 3 Say to King Rehoboam of Judah, son of Solomon, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, 4 "Thus says the LORD: You shall not go up or fight against your kindred. Let everyone return home, for this thing is from me." So they heeded the word of the LORD and turned back from the expedition against Jeroboam.

5 Rehoboam resided in Jerusalem, and he built cities for defense in Judah. 6 He built up Bethlehem, Etam, Tekoa, 7 Beth-zur, Soco, Adullam, 8 Gath, Maresah, Ziph, 9 Adoraim, Lachish, Azekah, 10 Zorah, Aijalon, and Hebron, fortified cities that are in Judah and in Benjamin. 11 He made the fortresses strong, and put

Read 2 Chronicles 11

Justice and peace are two sides of the same coin. The economic problems in Israel led to the rejection of the Davidic dynasty. Rehoboam sought to end the rebellion by violence. He was dissuaded from this course of action by the prophet Shemaiah. One important role of the prophet is to be an instrument of peace.

Reflect: The promotion of peace is an important component of the church's mission. If believers in Christ do not stand for peace, who will? Do you see peacemaking to be part of the church's mission or do you think that the issue is best left to politicians?

Pray: Open your ears and your heart to today's prophets who call for peace when political and even religious leaders are ready to embrace war. Pray for the end of war and the safe return of soldiers to their families.

Act: Become an active member in Pax Christi, Franciscans International, the 8th Day Center for Justice, or some other Catholic organization that works for justice and peace.

commanders in them, and stores of food, oil, and wine. ¹² He also put large shields and spears in all the cities, and made them very strong. So he held Judah and Benjamin.

Priests and Levites Support Rehoboam

¹³ The priests and the Levites who were in all Israel presented themselves to him from all their territories. ¹⁴ The Levites had left their common lands and their holdings and had come to Judah and Jerusalem, because Jeroboam and his sons had prevented them from serving as priests of the LORD, ¹⁵ and had appointed his own priests for the high places, and for the goat-demons, and for the calves that he had made. ¹⁶ Those who had set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel came after them from all the tribes of Israel to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the LORD, the God of their ancestors. ¹⁷ They strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and for three years they made Rehoboam son of Solomon secure, for they walked for three years in the way of David and Solomon.

Rehoboam's Marriages

¹⁸ Rehoboam took as his wife Mahalath daughter of Jerimoth son of David, and of Abihail daughter of Eliab son of Jesse. ¹⁹ She bore him sons: Jeush, Shemariah, and Zaham. ²⁰ After her he took Maacah daughter of Absalom, who bore him Abijah, Attai, Ziza, and Shelomith. ²¹ Rehoboam loved Maacah daughter of Absalom more than all his other wives and concubines (he took eighteen wives and sixty concubines, and became the father of twenty-eight sons and sixty daughters). ²² Rehoboam appointed Abijah son of Maacah as chief prince among his brothers, for he intended to make him king. ²³ He dealt wisely, and distributed some of his sons through all the districts of Judah and Benjamin, in all the fortified cities; he gave them abundant provisions, and found many wives for them.

Egypt Attacks Judah

12 When the rule of Rehoboam was established and he grew strong, he abandoned the law of the LORD, he and all Israel with him. ² In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, because they had been unfaithful to the LORD, King Shishak of Egypt came up against Jerusalem ³ with twelve hundred chariots and sixty thousand cavalry. A countless army came with him from Egypt—Libyans, Sukkiim, and Ethiopians.^a ⁴ He took the fortified cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusalem. ⁵ Then the prophet Shemaiah came to Rehoboam and to the officers of Judah, who had gathered

^a Or Nubians; Heb Cushites

Read 2 Chronicles 12:1–12

In trying to explain the fall of the two Israelite kingdoms, the Bible suggests that Israel's infidelity invariably led to military defeats inflicted by Israel's rivals for power in the ancient Near East. Verse 1 says that Rehoboam abandoned the Lord and verse 2 says that invasion from Egypt quickly followed. In verse 12, however, we learn that Rehoboam has repented and that Egypt's incursion has not been completely successful.

Reflect: There is no such thing as a "victimless crime" nor is there a sin whose effects do not reach beyond the guilty person. The moral choices we make do more than simply shape us as persons; they help form the society in which we live. Ignoring the demands of justice leads to the creation of an unjust society.

Pray: Without working for peace, praying for peace will be ineffective. Your prayers for peace ought to impel you to work for the creation of a society in which all people have a share in the bounty that God has provided for us.

Act: Carefully examine the economic choices you make, your investments, the places where you shop, and the firms with which you do business to be certain that you are not contributing to the creation of an unjust society.

at Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said to them, "Thus says the LORD: You abandoned me, so I have abandoned you to the hand of Shishak." ⁶ Then the officers of Israel and the king humbled themselves and said, "The LORD is in the right." ⁷ When the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, saying: "They have humbled themselves; I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance, and my wrath shall not be poured out on Jerusalem by the hand of Shishak. ⁸ Nevertheless they shall be his servants, so that they may know the difference between serving me and serving the kingdoms of other lands."

⁹ So King Shishak of Egypt came up against Jerusalem; he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house; he took everything. He also took away the shields of gold that Solomon had made; ¹⁰ but King Rehoboam made in place of them shields of bronze, and committed them to the hands of the officers of the guard, who kept the door of the king's house. ¹¹ Whenever the king went into the house of the LORD, the guard would come along bearing them, and would then bring them back to the guardroom. ¹² Because he humbled himself the wrath of the LORD turned from him, so as not to destroy them completely; moreover, conditions were good in Judah.

Death of Rehoboam

¹³ So King Rehoboam established himself in Jerusalem and reigned. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he began to reign; he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city that the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel to put his name there. His mother's name was Naamah the Ammonite. ¹⁴ He did evil, for he did not set his heart to seek the LORD.

¹⁵ Now the acts of Rehoboam, from first to last, are they not written in the records of the prophet Shemaiah and of the seer Iddo, recorded by genealogy? There were continual wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. ¹⁶ Rehoboam slept with his ancestors and was buried in the city of David; and his son Abijah succeeded him.

Abijah Reigns over Judah

1 In the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam, Abijah began to reign over Judah. ² He reigned for three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Micaiah daughter of Uriel of Gibeah.

Now there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam. ³ Abijah engaged in battle, having an army of valiant warriors, four hundred thousand picked men; and Jeroboam drew up his line of battle against him with eight

Read 2 Chronicles 12:13—13:22

After Rehoboam's death and Abijah's accession to the throne, war breaks out between the two Israelite kingdoms. On the eve of the fighting, the Chronicler places a most unlikely speech on the lips of Abijah. The king advises the army of the northern kingdom to surrender because their liturgy is not legitimate. The Chronicler writes from the perspective of the southern kingdom (Judah) and is convinced that the future of his people will be determined by their adherence to the liturgical traditions of their ancestors.

Reflect: The church's liturgy is a most important aspect of its life. Active participation in the worship offered by the church to the Lord is the principal way in which we live out our baptismal commitment. We can never overestimate the significance of worship that the Christian faithful offer to the Lord.

Pray: Liturgical prayer ought to help shape the piety of every Christian. Pray the psalms with the church in the Liturgy of the Hours. Meditate on the eucharistic prayers and the other prayers of the Mass.

Act: Make the study of the liturgy part of your ongoing formation as a Christian by taking advantage of adult faith formation opportunities offered by your parish or diocese.

hundred thousand picked mighty warriors. ⁴ Then Abijah stood on the slope of Mount Zemaraim that is in the hill country of Ephraim, and said, "Listen to me, Jeroboam and all Israel! ⁵ Do you not know that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingship over Israel forever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt? ⁶ Yet Jeroboam son of Nebat, a servant of Solomon son of David, rose up and rebelled against his lord; ⁷ and certain worthless scoundrels gathered around him and defied Rehoboam son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and irresolute and could not withstand them.

⁸ "And now you think that you can withstand the kingdom of the LORD in the hand of the sons of David, because you are a great multitude and have with you the golden calves that Jeroboam made as gods for you. ⁹ Have you not driven out the priests of the LORD, the descendants of Aaron, and the Levites, and made priests for yourselves like the peoples of other lands? Whoever comes to be consecrated with a young bull or seven rams becomes a priest of what are no gods. ¹⁰ But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not abandoned him. We have priests ministering to the LORD who are descendants of Aaron, and Levites for their service. ¹¹ They offer to the LORD every morning and every evening burnt offerings and fragrant incense, set out the rows of bread on the table of pure gold, and care for the golden lampstand so that its lamps may burn every evening; for we keep the charge of the LORD our God, but you have abandoned him. ¹² See, God is with us at our head, and his priests have their battle trumpets to sound the call to battle against you. O Israelites, do not fight against the LORD, the God of your ancestors; for you cannot succeed."

¹³ Jeroboam had sent an ambush around to come on them from behind; thus his troops^a were in front of Judah, and the ambush was behind them. ¹⁴ When Judah turned, the battle was in front of them and behind them. They cried out to the LORD, and the priests blew the trumpets. ¹⁵ Then the people of Judah raised the battle shout. And when the people of Judah shouted, God defeated Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. ¹⁶ The Israelites fled before Judah, and God gave them into their hands. ¹⁷ Abijah and his army defeated them with great slaughter; five hundred thousand picked men of Israel fell slain. ¹⁸ Thus the Israelites were subdued at that time, and the people of Judah prevailed, because they relied on the LORD, the God of their ancestors. ¹⁹ Abijah pursued Jeroboam, and took cities from him: Bethel with its villages and Jeshanah with its villages and Ephron^b with its villages. ²⁰ Jeroboam did not recover his power in the days of Abijah; the LORD

^a Heb they

^b Another reading is *Ephraim*

struck him down, and he died. ²¹ But Abijah grew strong. He took fourteen wives, and became the father of twenty-two sons

and sixteen daughters. ²² The rest of the acts of Abijah, his behavior and his deeds, are written in the story of the prophet Iddo.

Read 2 Chronicles 14

Asa is one of the few Israelite kings who receives a positive evaluation from the Chronicler. He praises Asa because of the king's commitment to the patterns of traditional Israelite worship. The Chronicler presents Asa's building projects and his defeat of the invading Ethiopians as signs of divine approval of the king's concern for legitimate forms of Israelite worship.

Reflect: For the Chronicler, continuity with the past is a very high value. Asa is praised because he commanded Judah "to seek the God of their ancestors." He got rid of all the foreign liturgical accouterments that had crept into Judah's worship. What importance do you give to continuity to the church's tradition?

Pray: "To seek God..." is a Hebrew idiom for worship. As you participate in the church's liturgy, remember that your worship is first the "seeking of God."

Act: Be intentional about your participation in the church's worship. Let it be one way you "seek God" in your life.

Asa Reigns

14^a So Abijah slept with his ancestors, and they buried him in the city of David. His son Asa succeeded him. In his days the land had rest for ten years. ^{2b} Asa did what was good and right in the sight of the LORD his God. ³ He took away the foreign altars and the high places, broke down the pillars, hewed down the sacred poles,^c ⁴ and commanded Judah to seek the LORD, the God of their ancestors, and to keep the law and the commandment. ⁵ He also removed from all the cities of Judah the high places and the incense altars. And the kingdom had rest under him. ⁶ He built fortified cities in Judah while the land had rest. He had no war in those years, for the LORD gave him peace. ⁷ He said to Judah, "Let us build these cities, and surround them with walls and towers, gates and bars; the land is still ours because we have sought the LORD our God; we have sought him, and he has given us peace on every side." So they built and prospered. ⁸ Asa had an army of three hundred thousand from Judah, armed with large shields and spears, and two hundred eighty thousand troops from Benjamin who carried shields and drew bows; all these were mighty warriors.

Ethiopian Invasion Repulsed

⁹ Zerah the Ethiopian^d came out against them with an army of a million men and three hundred chariots, and came as far as Mareshah. ¹⁰ Asa went out to meet him, and they drew up their lines of battle in the valley of Zephathah at Mareshah. ¹¹ Asa cried to the LORD his God, "O LORD, there is no difference for you between helping the mighty and the weak. Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this multitude. O LORD, you are our God; let no mortal prevail against you." ¹² So the LORD defeated the Ethiopians^e before Asa and before Judah, and the Ethiopians^e fled. ¹³ Asa and the army with him pursued them as far as Gerar, and the Ethiopians^e fell until no one remained alive; for they were broken before the LORD and his army. The people of Judah^f carried away a great quantity of booty. ¹⁴ They defeated all the cities around Gerar, for the fear of the LORD was on them. They plundered all the cities; for there was much plunder in them. ¹⁵ They also attacked the tents of those who had livestock,^g and carried away sheep and goats in abundance, and camels. Then they returned to Jerusalem.

^a Ch 13.23 in Heb

^b Ch 14.1 in Heb

^c Heb *Asherim*

^d Or *Nubian*; Heb *Cushite*

^e Or *Nubians*; Heb *Cushites*

^f Heb *They*

^g Meaning of Heb uncertain

Read 2 Chronicles 15

Azariah, an otherwise unknown individual, under the inspiration of the spirit, admonishes King Asa to remain loyal to God. The words that Azariah speaks seem to describe the time immediately following the fall of the kingdom of Judah. The first readers of this text would expect an improvement in their circumstances if they were to complete their work of reform as Asa completed his.

Reflect: The church is always in need of reform. Both the church's leaders and Christian faithful need to be vigilant in order to maintain and enhance their relationship with God—a relationship that ought to be characterized by loyalty and commitment.

Pray: Intercede for the church's leaders, that they may be open to the message that calls for reform. It is through its commitment to continual conversion that the people of God show their loyalty to God.

Act: Identify the prophetic voices that the Spirit has inspired to speak to the church today, calling for continual conversion. Hear what these voices are saying, resolving to continue your own personal program of reform.

15 The spirit of God came upon Azariah son of Oded. ² He went out to meet Asa and said to him, “Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: The LORD is with you, while you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you abandon him, he will abandon you. ³ For a long time Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law; ⁴ but when in their distress they turned to the LORD, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found by them. ⁵ In those times it was not safe for anyone to go or come, for great disturbances afflicted all the inhabitants of the lands. ⁶ They were broken in pieces, nation against nation and city against city, for God troubled them with every sort of distress. ⁷ But you, take courage! Do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded.”

⁸ When Asa heard these words, the prophecy of Azariah son of Oded,^a he took courage, and put away the abominable idols from all the land of Judah and Benjamin and from the towns that he had taken in the hill country of Ephraim. He repaired the altar of the LORD that was in front of the vestibule of the house of the LORD.^b ⁹ He gathered all Judah and Benjamin, and those from Ephraim, Manasseh, and Simeon who were residing as aliens with them, for great numbers had deserted to him from Israel when they saw that the LORD his God was with him. ¹⁰ They were gathered at Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa. ¹¹ They sacrificed to the LORD on that day, from the booty that they had brought, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep. ¹² They entered into a covenant to seek the LORD, the God of their ancestors, with all their heart and with all their soul. ¹³ Whoever would not seek the LORD, the God of Israel, should be put to death, whether young or old, man or woman. ¹⁴ They took an oath to the LORD with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with horns. ¹⁵ All Judah rejoiced over the oath; for they had sworn with all their heart, and had sought him with their whole desire, and he was found by them, and the LORD gave them rest all around.

¹⁶ King Asa even removed his mother Maacah from being queen mother because she had made an abominable image for Asherah. Asa cut down her image, crushed it, and burned it at the Wadi Kidron. ¹⁷ But the high places were not taken out of Israel. Nevertheless the heart of Asa was true all his days. ¹⁸ He brought into the house of God the votive gifts of his father and his own votive gifts—silver, gold, and utensils. ¹⁹ And there was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of the reign of Asa.

^a Compare Syr Vg: Heb *the prophecy, the prophet Obed*

^b Heb *the vestibule of the LORD*

Read 2 Chronicles 16:1–10

Asa's confidence in God broke down under the pressure of a military incursion by the kingdom of Israel. Asa made an alliance with Aram, hoping that the pressure that Aram would bring to bear on Israel would end the threat against him. Hanani, the seer, denounced Asa's lack of faith, but the king silenced the seer's criticism and the opposition to his policies that it engendered.

Reflect: Asa believed that he knew how to deal with the threat from Israel. He rejected the criticism that came from Hanani, refusing to brook opposition. Are you ready to acknowledge the relativity of your insights? How do you react to correction? Is your first impulse to defend your actions or to examine them in light of the gospel?

Pray: Prayerfully support those who question governmental policies on moral grounds. Pray that their efforts to call the government to policies that foster justice and peace may be successful.

Act: Become an informed citizen. Carefully evaluate the government's policies in light of the gospel and the church's teachings.

Read 2 Chronicles 16:11–14

Asa's lack of faith displays itself not only in the king's public life but also in his personal life. No doubt the Chronicler believed that Asa's health problems were retribution for his lack of faith evidenced by his alliance with Aram. From this perspective, resorting to physicians would offer no solution to the problems. Still, the Chronicler describes the honors given to Asa in death. After all, during most of his reign Asa kept Judah faithful to God.

Alliance with Aram Condemned

16 In the thirty-sixth year of the reign of Asa, King Baasha of Israel went up against Judah, and built Ramah, to prevent anyone from going out or coming into the territory of^a King Asa of Judah. ² Then Asa took silver and gold from the treasures of the house of the LORD and the king's house, and sent them to King Ben-hadad of Aram, who resided in Damascus, saying, ³ "Let there be an alliance between me and you, like that between my father and your father; I am sending to you silver and gold; go, break your alliance with King Baasha of Israel, so that he may withdraw from me." ⁴ Ben-hadad listened to King Asa, and sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel. They conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel-maim, and all the store-cities of Naphtali. ⁵ When Baasha heard of it, he stopped building Ramah, and let his work cease. ⁶ Then King Asa brought all Judah, and they carried away the stones of Ramah and its timber, with which Baasha had been building, and with them he built up Geba and Mizpah.

⁷ At that time the seer Hanani came to King Asa of Judah, and said to him, "Because you relied on the king of Aram, and did not rely on the LORD your God, the army of the king of Aram has escaped you. ⁸ Were not the Ethiopians^b and the Libyans a huge army with exceedingly many chariots and cavalry? Yet because you relied on the LORD, he gave them into your hand. ⁹ For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the entire earth, to strengthen those whose heart is true to him. You have done foolishly in this; for from now on you will have wars." ¹⁰ Then Asa was angry with the seer, and put him in the stocks, in prison, for he was in a rage with him because of this. And Asa inflicted cruelties on some of the people at the same time.

Asa's Disease and Death

¹¹ The acts of Asa, from first to last, are written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. ¹² In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was diseased in his feet, and his disease became severe; yet even in his disease he did not seek the LORD, but sought help from physicians. ¹³ Then Asa slept with his ancestors, dying in the forty-first year of his reign. ¹⁴ They buried him in the tomb that he had hewn out for himself in the city of David. They laid him on a bier that had been filled with various kinds of spices prepared by the perfumer's art; and they made a very great fire in his honor.

^a Heb lacks the territory of

^b Or Nubians; Heb Cushites

Reflect: Can adverse circumstances in our personal lives lead us away from God? Are we secure in God's love no matter what may befall us? Our faith calls us not only to cope with evil circumstances but also to embrace them as opportunities to assert our loyalty and commitment to the Lord.

Pray: Trusting that God wants only what is best for us is difficult under some circumstances. Pray for the grace of perseverance.

Act: Offer words of support to those you know who are dealing with difficult circumstances. Help them to place their trust in God's love.

Read 2 Chronicles 17

The Chronicler paints a very positive portrait of Jehoshaphat. Not only was he personally obedient to the Torah, but he sent out royal officials and Levites to teach the people what God expected of them. In typical fashion, the Chronicler assumes that Judah's favorable military position under Jehoshaphat was a reward for his obedience to the law.

Reflect: Jehoshaphat commissioned several people to teach God's law to his subjects. Do you see yourself as responsible for handing on the faith to others? Do you accept responsibility to share your faith with others?

Pray: Remember those who serve as teachers and catechists. Pray that they may exercise their ministry with integrity and that they may successfully animate those they teach.

Act: Prepare yourself to serve in your parish's catechetical ministry. Develop the skills to share your faith with young people.

Jehoshaphat's Reign

17 His son Jehoshaphat succeeded him, and strengthened himself against Israel. ² He placed forces in all the fortified cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim that his father Asa had taken. ³ The LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the earlier ways of his father;^a he did not seek the Baals, ⁴ but sought the God of his father and walked in his commandments, and not according to the ways of Israel. ⁵ Therefore the LORD established the kingdom in his hand. All Judah brought tribute to Jehoshaphat, and he had great riches and honor. ⁶ His heart was courageous in the ways of the LORD; and furthermore he removed the high places and the sacred poles^b from Judah.

7 In the third year of his reign he sent his officials, Ben-hail, Obadiah, Zechariah, Nethanel, and Micaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah. ⁸ With them were the Levites, Shemaiah, Nethaniah, Zebadiah, Asahel, Shemiramoth, Jehonathan, Adonijah, Tobijah, and Tob-adonijah; and with these Levites, the priests Elishama and Jehoram. ⁹ They taught in Judah, having the book of the law of the LORD with them; they went around through all the cities of Judah and taught among the people.

10 The fear of the LORD fell on all the kingdoms of the lands around Judah, and they did not make war against Jehoshaphat. ¹¹ Some of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and silver for tribute; and the Arabs also brought him seven thousand seven hundred rams and seven thousand seven hundred male goats. ¹² Jehoshaphat grew steadily greater. He built fortresses and storage cities in Judah. ¹³ He carried out great works in the cities of Judah. He had soldiers, mighty warriors, in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ This was the muster of them by ancestral houses: Of Judah, the commanders of the thousands: Adnah the commander, with three hundred thousand mighty warriors, ¹⁵ and next to him Jehohanan the commander, with two hundred eighty thousand, ¹⁶ and next to him Amasiah son of Zichri, a volunteer for the service of the LORD, with two hundred thousand mighty warriors. ¹⁷ Of Benjamin: Eliada, a mighty warrior, with two hundred thousand armed with bow and shield, ¹⁸ and next to him Jehozabad with one hundred eighty thousand armed for war. ¹⁹ These were in the service of the king, besides those whom the king had placed in the fortified cities throughout all Judah.

^a Another reading is *his father David*

^b Heb *Asherim*

Read 2 Chronicles 18:1–27

Jehoshaphat sought to neutralize the threat that Israel was to Judah by having the royal families of the two kingdoms united through marriage. Of course, Judah was the “junior” partner. Ahab tried to induce Jehoshaphat to join him in a military expedition to the east side of the Jordan River. Jehoshaphat was not enthusiastic about the prospect, so he asked for a prophetic word. Ahab’s court prophets supported the king, but a certain Micaiah stood alone in his opposition to the war. A royal official had Micaiah imprisoned on the king’s order.

Reflect: Are you willing to take unpopular positions when the ideals of the gospel require you to do so? Are you ready to be steamrolled by the crowd into compromising the ideals of the gospel? Does your desire to support the government’s military adventures trump your calling to be an instrument of peace?

Pray: Pray for all prisoners of conscience—people who are incarcerated because they refuse to compromise their religious ideals.

Act: Explore nonviolence as a means of settling differences among people and nations. Join and support organizations that foster a just and peaceful world through nonviolent education and community building.

Micaiah Predicts Failure

18 Now Jehoshaphat had great riches and honor; and he made a marriage alliance with Ahab. ² After some years he went down to Ahab in Samaria. Ahab slaughtered an abundance of sheep and oxen for him and for the people who were with him, and induced him to go up against Ramoth-gilead. ³ King Ahab of Israel said to King Jehoshaphat of Judah, “Will you go with me to Ramoth-gilead?” He answered him, “I am with you, my people are your people. We will be with you in the war.”

⁴ But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, “Inquire first for the word of the LORD.” ⁵ Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, four hundred of them, and said to them, “Shall we go to battle against Ramoth-gilead, or shall I refrain?” They said, “Go up; for God will give it into the hand of the king.” ⁶ But Jehoshaphat said, “Is there no other prophet of the LORD here of whom we may inquire?” ⁷ The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “There is still one other by whom we may inquire of the LORD, Micaiah son of Imlah; but I hate him, for he never prophesies anything favorable about me, but only disaster.” Jehoshaphat said, “Let the king not say such a thing.” ⁸ Then the king of Israel summoned an officer and said, “Bring quickly Micaiah son of Imlah.” ⁹ Now the king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah were sitting on their thrones, arrayed in their robes; and they were sitting at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them. ¹⁰ Zedekiah son of Chenaanah made for himself horns of iron, and he said, “Thus says the LORD: With these you shall gore the Arameans until they are destroyed.” ¹¹ All the prophets were prophesying the same and saying, “Go up to Ramoth-gilead and triumph; the LORD will give it into the hand of the king.”

¹² The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, “Look, the words of the prophets with one accord are favorable to the king; let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak favorably.” ¹³ But Micaiah said, “As the LORD lives, whatever my God says, that I will speak.”

¹⁴ When he had come to the king, the king said to him, “Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I refrain?” He answered, “Go up and triumph; they will be given into your hand.” ¹⁵ But the king said to him, “How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?” ¹⁶ Then Micaiah^a said, “I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, like sheep without a shepherd; and the LORD said, ‘These have no master; let each one go home in

^a Heb *he*

Read 2 Chronicles 18:28—19:3

The Israel-Judah military expedition was a failure. Ahab of Israel was killed in battle while Jehoshaphat escaped the defeat with his life. Though Jehoshaphat ignored Micaiah's warning, a prophet from Judah scolds Jehoshaphat for having joined Ahab in a military alliance. Because Jehoshaphat has done some good and is intent on continuing his program of reform, God's judgment will be less severe.

Reflect: Are you ready to compromise your religious ideals when confronted by a difficult choice? Do you try to find alternatives that are in keeping with the values of the gospel? What is the engine that drives the ethical choices you make?

Pray: Ask to be forgiven for acts of compromise. Pray for the strength to remain faithful no matter how unfavorable the circumstances may be.

Act: Do a thorough assessment of your pattern of moral decision-making. Assess your tendency to compromise your Christian ideals.

peace.”¹⁷ The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy anything favorable about me, but only disaster?”

18 Then Micaiah^a said, “Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, with all the host of heaven standing to the right and to the left of him.”¹⁹ And the LORD said, ‘Who will entice King Ahab of Israel, so that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?’ Then one said one thing, and another said another,²⁰ until a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, saying, ‘I will entice him.’ The LORD asked him, ‘How?’²¹ He replied, ‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ Then the LORD^a said, ‘You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do it.’²² So you see, the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of these your prophets; the LORD has decreed disaster for you.”

23 Then Zedekiah son of Chenaanah came up to Micaiah, slapped him on the cheek, and said, “Which way did the spirit of the LORD pass from me to speak to you?”²⁴ Micaiah replied, “You will find out on that day when you go in to hide in an inner chamber.”²⁵ The king of Israel then ordered, “Take Micaiah, and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king’s son;²⁶ and say, ‘Thus says the king: Put this fellow in prison, and feed him on reduced rations of bread and water until I return in peace.’”²⁷ Micaiah said, “If you return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me.” And he said, “Hear, you peoples, all of you!”

Defeat and Death of Ahab

28 So the king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead.²⁹ The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, “I will disguise myself and go into battle, but you wear your robes.” So the king of Israel disguised himself, and they went into battle.³⁰ Now the king of Aram had commanded the captains of his chariots, “Fight with no one small or great, but only with the king of Israel.”³¹ When the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, they said, “It is the king of Israel.” So they turned to fight against him; and Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him. God drew them away from him,³² for when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back from pursuing him.³³ But a certain man drew his bow and unknowingly struck the king of Israel between the scale armor and the breastplate; so he said to the driver of his chariot, “Turn around, and carry me out of the battle, for I am wounded.”³⁴ The battle grew hot that day, and the king of Israel propped himself up in his chariot facing the Arameans until evening; then at sunset he died.

^a Heb *he*

Read 2 Chronicles 19:4–11

Fresh from his disastrous military adventure with Ahab, Jehoshaphat begins a program of reform. Central to that program is the appointment of judicial officers to settle disputes. They also have the responsibility of teaching the people their obligations, responsibilities that flow from traditional Israelite morality.

Reflect: Jehoshaphat's appointment of judicial officers to settle disputes and teach the law was the cornerstone of his reform. It is important that competent people be empowered to keep the church's ongoing reform from stalling. We need people who can motivate, animate, and lead others to make the values of the gospel a reality in their lives.

Pray: The church's great need today is personnel. Pray for the leaders of the church, both clerical and lay, that all may collaborate for the good of God's people.

Act: Discern whether you have a vocation to leadership in the church. If you feel called, enroll in a local leadership training program so that you can be equipped for service.

19 King Jehoshaphat of Judah returned in safety to his house in Jerusalem. ² Jehu son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him and said to King Jehoshaphat, "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Because of this, wrath has gone out against you from the LORD. ³ Nevertheless, some good is found in you, for you destroyed the sacred poles^a out of the land, and have set your heart to seek God."

The Reforms of Jehoshaphat

4 Jehoshaphat resided at Jerusalem; then he went out again among the people, from Beer-sheba to the hill country of Ephraim, and brought them back to the LORD, the God of their ancestors. ⁵ He appointed judges in the land in all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city, ⁶ and said to the judges, "Consider what you are doing, for you judge not on behalf of human beings but on the LORD's behalf; he is with you in giving judgment. ⁷ Now, let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take care what you do, for there is no perversion of justice with the LORD our God, or partiality, or taking of bribes."

8 Moreover in Jerusalem Jehoshaphat appointed certain Levites and priests and heads of families of Israel, to give judgment for the LORD and to decide disputed cases. They had their seat at Jerusalem. ⁹ He charged them: "This is how you shall act: in the fear of the LORD, in faithfulness, and with your whole heart; ¹⁰ whenever a case comes to you from your kindred who live in their cities, concerning bloodshed, law or commandment, statutes or ordinances, then you shall instruct them, so that they may not incur guilt before the LORD and wrath may not come on you and your kindred. Do so, and you will not incur guilt. ¹¹ See, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the LORD; and Zebadiah son of Ishmael, the governor of the house of Judah, in all the king's matters; and the Levites will serve you as officers. Deal courageously, and may the LORD be with the good!"

Invasion from the East

20 After this the Moabites and Ammonites, and with them some of the Meunites,^b came against Jehoshaphat for battle. ² Messengers^c came and told Jehoshaphat, "A great multitude is coming against you from Edom,^d from beyond the sea; already they are at Hazazon-tamar" (that is, En-gedi). ³ Jehoshaphat was afraid; he set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. ⁴ Judah assembled to seek help from the LORD; from all the towns of Judah they came to seek the LORD.

^a Heb *Asheroth*

^b Compare 26.7: Heb *Ammonites*

^c Heb *They*

^d One Ms: MT *Aram*

Read 2 Chronicles 20:1–30

In the absence of a great imperial power, the small national states of the eastern Mediterranean region competed for hegemony. This text describes pressure brought to bear upon Judah by the national states east of the Jordan River. The Chronicler describes Judah's response in liturgical colors. There is no real military response given in the chapter. Judah's loyalty to God expressed in its worship was responsible for the people's salvation.

Reflect: The Bible often presents prayer as the proper action to take in a time of crisis. Do you prefer to rely solely on your own potential to overcome difficult situations? What role does prayer have in your life?

Pray: Make the prayer for peace in the world a regular feature of the intercessory prayer you offer for God's enduring love.

Act: Join with your fellow Christians as they pray for solutions to the world's problems. Find a parish that regularly has a holy hour for peace and pray with other believers.

Jehoshaphat's Prayer and Victory

5 Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court, ⁶ and said, "O LORD, God of our ancestors, are you not God in heaven? Do you not rule over all the kingdoms of the nations? In your hand are power and might, so that no one is able to withstand you. ⁷ Did you not, O our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and give it forever to the descendants of your friend Abraham? ⁸ They have lived in it, and in it have built you a sanctuary for your name, saying, ⁹ 'If disaster comes upon us, the sword, judgment,^a or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house, and before you, for your name is in this house, and cry to you in our distress, and you will hear and save.' ¹⁰ See now, the people of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir, whom you would not let Israel invade when they came from the land of Egypt, and whom they avoided and did not destroy—¹¹ they reward us by coming to drive us out of your possession that you have given us to inherit. ¹² O our God, will you not execute judgment upon them? For we are powerless against this great multitude that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you."

13 Meanwhile all Judah stood before the LORD, with their little ones, their wives, and their children. ¹⁴ Then the spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel son of Zechariah, son of Benaiah, son of Jeiel, son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the middle of the assembly. ¹⁵ He said, "Listen, all Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, and King Jehoshaphat: Thus says the LORD to you: 'Do not fear or be dismayed at this great multitude; for the battle is not yours but God's. ¹⁶ Tomorrow go down against them; they will come up by the ascent of Ziz; you will find them at the end of the valley, before the wilderness of Jeruel. ¹⁷ This battle is not for you to fight; take your position, stand still, and see the victory of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.' Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you."

18 Then Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the LORD, worshipping the LORD. ¹⁹ And the Levites, of the Kohathites and the Korahites, stood up to praise the LORD, the God of Israel, with a very loud voice.

20 They rose early in the morning and went out into the wilderness of Tekoa; and as they went out, Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, O Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem! Believe in the LORD your God and you will be established; believe his prophets."

^a Or the sword of judgment

Read 2 Chronicles 20:31–37

In 17:6, the Chronicler said that Jehoshaphat removed the high places; here he asserts that Jehoshaphat failed to do so. Though the Chronicler remembers Jehoshaphat as having been inconsistent in his responsibility of maintaining Judah's loyalty to God, the story of the king ends with another example of how Israel drew Judah into its web. The Chronicler regarded any association with the northern kingdom to be a breach of the loyalty that Judah owed to God.

Reflect: How consistent are we in our life with God? Do we go back and forth or are we steady? Consistency gives the best witness to the world.

Pray: Pray for the maturity in Christ that brings with it a consistent pattern of behavior.

Act: Identify the areas of your life that prevent you from being consistent in your following of Christ. Seek the help of a spiritual director who can offer you advice on how you might overcome a pattern of backsliding.

21 When he had taken counsel with the people, he appointed those who were to sing to the LORD and praise him in holy splendor, as they went before the army, saying,

“Give thanks to the LORD,
for his steadfast love endures forever.”

22 As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set an ambush against the Ammonites, Moab, and Mount Seir, who had come against Judah, so that they were routed.

23 For the Ammonites and Moab attacked the inhabitants of Mount Seir, destroying them utterly; and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they all helped to destroy one another.

24 When Judah came to the watchtower of the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; they were corpses lying on the ground; no one had escaped.

25 When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take the booty from them, they found livestock^a in great numbers, goods, clothing, and precious things, which they took for themselves until they could carry no more. They spent three days taking the booty, because of its abundance.

26 On the fourth day they assembled in the Valley of Beracah, for there they blessed the LORD; therefore that place has been called the Valley of Beracah^b to this day. 27 Then all the people of Judah and Jerusalem, with Jehoshaphat at their head, returned to Jerusalem with joy, for the LORD had enabled them to rejoice over their enemies. 28 They came to Jerusalem, with harps and lyres and trumpets, to the house of the LORD. 29 The fear of God came on all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard that the LORD had fought against the enemies of Israel. 30 And the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet, for his God gave him rest all around.

The End of Jehoshaphat's Reign

31 So Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah. He was thirty-five years old when he began to reign; he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Azubah daughter of Shilhi. 32 He walked in the way of his father Asa and did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the LORD. 33 Yet the high places were not removed; the people had not yet set their hearts upon the God of their ancestors.

34 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, from first to last, are written in the Annals of Jehu son of Hanani, which are recorded in the Book of the Kings of Israel.

35 After this King Jehoshaphat of Judah joined with King Ahaziah of Israel, who did wickedly. 36 He joined him in building ships to go to Tarshish; they built the

^a Gk: Heb *among them*

^b That is *Blessing*

ships in Ezion-geber.³⁷ Then Eliezer son of Dodavahu of Mareshah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, “Because you have joined with Ahaziah, the LORD will destroy what you have made.” And the ships were wrecked and were not able to go to Tarshish.

Read 2 Chronicles 21

The Chronicler has nothing positive to say about Jehoram. This king conducted a purge, eliminating any rival claimants to the throne and any who would oppose his rule. He was more like the discredited kings of Israel than he was like his father and grandfather whom the Chronicler spoke well of. To demonstrate Jehoram’s unworthiness to sit on the throne of David, the Chronicler points to the military defeats suffered by Jehoram, the criticism leveled at him by Elijah, and the terrible disease that eventually took his life.

Reflect: The Chronicler presents Jehoram as a negative example to his readers. There was nothing positive about his rule and he suffered a terrible death. No one mourned his passing. Jehoram’s story is a warning to the reader of the consequences of disobedience.

Pray: Ask for the grace of the Spirit to avoid a life of disobedience and neglect of the Lord—a life that ends in disaster.

Act: No one is beyond reach. Join in efforts at your parish to invite lapsed Catholics to “come home.” Be positive and nonjudgmental in your approach to them, leaving all judgment to the Lord.

Jehoram’s Reign

21 Jehoshaphat slept with his ancestors and was buried with his ancestors in the city of David; his son Jehoram succeeded him.² He had brothers, the sons of Jehoshaphat: Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariah, Michael, and Shephatiah; all these were the sons of King Jehoshaphat of Judah.^a ³ Their father gave them many gifts, of silver, gold, and valuable possessions, together with fortified cities in Judah; but he gave the kingdom to Jehoram, because he was the firstborn.⁴ When Jehoram had ascended the throne of his father and was established, he put all his brothers to the sword, and also some of the officials of Israel.⁵ Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he began to reign; he reigned eight years in Jerusalem.⁶ He walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done; for the daughter of Ahab was his wife. He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD.⁷ Yet the LORD would not destroy the house of David because of the covenant that he had made with David, and since he had promised to give a lamp to him and to his descendants forever.

Revolt of Edom

⁸ In his days Edom revolted against the rule of Judah and set up a king of their own.⁹ Then Jehoram crossed over with his commanders and all his chariots. He set out by night and attacked the Edomites, who had surrounded him and his chariot commanders.¹⁰ So Edom has been in revolt against the rule of Judah to this day. At that time Libnah also revolted against his rule, because he had forsaken the LORD, the God of his ancestors.

Elijah’s Letter

¹¹ Moreover he made high places in the hill country of Judah, and led the inhabitants of Jerusalem into unfaithfulness, and made Judah go astray.¹² A letter came to him from the prophet Elijah, saying: “Thus says the LORD, the God of your father David: Because you have not walked in the ways of your father Jehoshaphat or in the ways of King Asa of Judah,¹³ but have walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and have led Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem into unfaithfulness, as the house of Ahab led Israel into unfaithfulness, and because you also have killed your brothers, members of your father’s house, who were better than yourself,¹⁴ see, the LORD will bring a great plague on your peo-

^a Gk Syr: Heb *Israel*

ple, your children, your wives, and all your possessions,¹⁵ and you yourself will have a severe sickness with a disease of your bowels, until your bowels come out, day after day, because of the disease.”

16 The LORD aroused against Jehoram the anger of the Philistines and of the Arabs who are near the Ethiopians.^a 17 They came up against Judah, invaded it, and carried away all the possessions they found that belonged to the king’s house, along with his sons and his wives, so that no son was left to him except Jehoahaz, his youngest son.

Disease and Death of Jehoram

18 After all this the LORD struck him in his bowels with an incurable disease.¹⁹ In course of time, at the end of two years, his bowels came out because of the disease, and he died in great agony. His people made no fire in his honor, like the fires made for his ancestors.²⁰ He was thirty-two years old when he began to reign; he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. He departed with no one’s regret. They buried him in the city of David, but not in the tombs of the kings.

Read 2 Chronicles 22:1–9

Ahaziah followed his father Jehoram as king of Judah and, like his father, ignored his responsibilities to God. He devoted his attention to the power politics of the region and allied himself with the kingdom of Israel against Aram. The unrest in that kingdom led to a revolt and the assassination of Israel’s royal family. Ahaziah happened to be visiting at the time, so he too was assassinated in the coup that toppled Joram, the king of Israel.

Reflect: Ahaziah did not recognize the futility of a foreign policy that included making war on his neighbors. War bred dissatisfaction in Israel. Ahaziah was caught up in the revolt and it cost him his life. Have you ever gotten into a situation that spun out of control? Addictions can devastate people before they become aware of how they have lost control to their addiction.

Pray: Prayer is a spiritual discipline that can keep us on track. Prayer helps us experience a “Higher Power” who can keep us from becoming a slave to the powers of evil that threaten us.

Act: One cannot master addictions alone. Let us seek help to overcome those demons that would wrest control of our lives from us.

Ahaziah’s Reign

22 The inhabitants of Jerusalem made his youngest son Ahaziah king as his successor; for the troops who came with the Arabs to the camp had killed all the older sons. So Ahaziah son of Jehoram reigned as king of Judah.² Ahaziah was forty-two years old when he began to reign; he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Athaliah, a granddaughter of Omri.³ He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab, for his mother was his counselor in doing wickedly.⁴ He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as the house of Ahab had done; for after the death of his father they were his counselors, to his ruin.⁵ He even followed their advice, and went with Jehoram son of King Ahab of Israel to make war against King Hazael of Aram at Ramoth-gilead. The Arameans wounded Joram,⁶ and he returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds that he had received at Ramah, when he fought King Hazael of Aram. And Ahaziah son of King Jehoram of Judah went down to see Joram son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was sick.

7 But it was ordained by God that the downfall of Ahaziah should come about through his going to visit Joram. For when he came there he went out with Jehoram to meet Jehu son of Nimshi, whom the LORD had anointed to destroy the house of Ahab.⁸ When Jehu was executing judgment on the house of Ahab, he met the officials of Judah and the sons of Ahaziah’s brothers, who attended Ahaziah, and he killed them.⁹ He searched for Ahaziah, who was captured while hiding in Samaria and was brought to Jehu, and put to death. They buried him, for they said, “He is the grandson of Jehoshaphat, who sought the LORD with all his heart.” And the house of Ahaziah had no one able to rule the kingdom.

^a Or Nubians; Heb Cushites

Read 2 Chronicles 22:10—23:15

Ahaziah's death led to a seizure of power by his mother Athaliah, who was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel of the kingdom of Israel. To thwart Athaliah's plans, her stepdaughter Jehosheba hid Joash, Ahaziah's son, when it became clear that Athaliah intended to murder all possible male claimants to Judah's throne. Jehosheba and her husband kept the child hidden for seven years until a counterrevolution was possible. During the coup against Athaliah, she was killed.

Reflect: Evil is a power that quickly spins out of control. The failure of Jehoram and Ahaziah led to Athaliah's coup. That is the tragedy of evil—it envelops even the innocent. In this case, it led to the murder of all Ahaziah's male children except Joash.

Pray: Prayer is a power that can help us resist evil. Even in the most difficult times—especially in the most difficult times—it is important to maintain the discipline of prayer.

Act: Sometimes decisive action must be taken to prevent the power of evil from being completely victorious. Neutrality in the face of evil is not an option. Be always ready to confront evil powers.

Athaliah Seizes the Throne

10 Now when Athaliah, Ahaziah's mother, saw that her son was dead, she set about to destroy all the royal family of the house of Judah. ¹¹ But Jehoshabeath, the king's daughter, took Joash son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's children who were about to be killed; she put him and his nurse in a bedroom. Thus Jehoshabeath, daughter of King Jehoram and wife of the priest Jehoiada—because she was a sister of Ahaziah—hid him from Athaliah, so that she did not kill him; ¹² he remained with them six years, hidden in the house of God, while Athaliah reigned over the land.

23 But in the seventh year Jehoiada took courage, and entered into a compact with the commanders of the hundreds, Azariah son of Jeroham, Ishmael son of Jehohanan, Azariah son of Obed, Maaseiah son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat son of Zichri. ² They went around through Judah and gathered the Levites from all the towns of Judah, and the heads of families of Israel, and they came to Jerusalem. ³ Then the whole assembly made a covenant with the king in the house of God. Jehoiada^a said to them, "Here is the king's son! Let him reign, as the LORD promised concerning the sons of David. ⁴ This is what you are to do: one-third of you, priests and Levites, who come on duty on the sabbath, shall be gatekeepers, ⁵ one-third shall be at the king's house, and one-third at the Gate of the Foundation; and all the people shall be in the courts of the house of the LORD. ⁶ Do not let anyone enter the house of the LORD except the priests and ministering Levites; they may enter, for they are holy, but all the other^b people shall observe the instructions of the LORD. ⁷ The Levites shall surround the king, each with his weapons in his hand; and whoever enters the house shall be killed. Stay with the king in his comings and goings."

Joash Crowned King

8 The Levites and all Judah did according to all that the priest Jehoiada commanded; each brought his men, who were to come on duty on the sabbath, with those who were to go off duty on the sabbath; for the priest Jehoiada did not dismiss the divisions. ⁹ The priest Jehoiada delivered to the captains the spears and the large and small shields that had been King David's, which were in the house of God; ¹⁰ and he set all the people as a guard for the king, everyone with weapon in hand, from the south side of the house to the north side of the house, around the altar and the house. ¹¹ Then he brought out the king's son, put the crown on

^a Heb *He*

^b Heb lacks *other*

Read 2 Chronicles 23:16–21

The Chronicler gives priests a prominent role in the life of the community. Here the priest Jehoiada reconstitutes the community's religious life after the disruptions caused by three unworthy rulers in a row. It is Jehoiada who sets the rightful heir on the throne, makes a covenant between God, the king, and the people, reorders the temple, its rituals and personnel, and reorganizes the political life of Judah.

Reflect: What is the role and status of priests today—given the diminishing number of priests and the sexual abuse scandal? What is the state of priests' morale today?

Pray: Prayers for vocations to the priesthood are always appropriate and needed. Also, pray that priests may serve with creativity, enthusiasm, and integrity.

Act: Speak positively to young people about a vocation to the priesthood. Encourage them to consider serving the people of God in the ordained ministry.

him, and gave him the covenant;^a they proclaimed him king, and Jehoiada and his sons anointed him; and they shouted, "Long live the king!"

Athaliah Murdered

12 When Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she went into the house of the LORD to the people; ¹³ and when she looked, there was the king standing by his pillar at the entrance, and the captains and the trumpeters beside the king, and all the people of the land rejoicing and blowing trumpets, and the singers with their musical instruments leading in the celebration. Athaliah tore her clothes, and cried, "Treason! Treason!" ¹⁴ Then the priest Jehoiada brought out the captains who were set over the army, saying to them, "Bring her out between the ranks; anyone who follows her is to be put to the sword." For the priest said, "Do not put her to death in the house of the LORD." ¹⁵ So they laid hands on her; she went into the entrance of the Horse Gate of the king's house, and there they put her to death.

16 Jehoiada made a covenant between himself and all the people and the king that they should be the LORD's people. ¹⁷ Then all the people went to the house of Baal, and tore it down; his altars and his images they broke in pieces, and they killed Mattan, the priest of Baal, in front of the altars. ¹⁸ Jehoiada assigned the care of the house of the LORD to the levitical priests whom David had organized to be in charge of the house of the LORD, to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, as it is written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, according to the order of David. ¹⁹ He stationed the gatekeepers at the gates of the house of the LORD so that no one should enter who was in any way unclean. ²⁰ And he took the captains, the nobles, the governors of the people, and all the people of the land, and they brought the king down from the house of the LORD, marching through the upper gate to the king's house. They set the king on the royal throne. ²¹ So all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet after Athaliah had been killed with the sword.

Joash Repairs the Temple

24 Joash was seven years old when he began to reign; he reigned forty years in Jerusalem; his mother's name was Zibiah of Beer-sheba. ² Joash did what was right in the sight of the LORD all the days of the priest Jehoiada. ³ Jehoiada got two wives for him, and he became the father of sons and daughters.

⁴ Some time afterward Joash decided to restore the house of the LORD. ⁵ He assembled the priests and the

^a Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

Read 2 Chronicles 24

The story of Joash is the story of Israel and Judah in microcosm: what begins with so much promise ends in disaster. While under the tutelage of Jehoiada, King Joash does well. But after the priest dies, the king's loyalty to God disappears. When denounced by Jehoiada's son, Joash has the young priest and prophet executed. An outnumbered Aramean army invades Judah and is successful despite the odds. The severely wounded Joash is assassinated by his own courtiers.

Reflect: Left to our own devices, we can find ourselves in a lot of trouble. We need to stay connected with the church and its leadership. We will be able to maintain our commitment to the Lord if we maintain our relationship with the Christian faithful, our pastors, bishops, and pope.

Pray: The unity of the church ought to be a prime concern for believers. We pray that nothing we do will disrupt the communion of the faithful.

Act: Be a reconciler. When the inevitable rifts occur in your Christian community, make every effort to bring about understanding and mutual respect.

Levites and said to them, "Go out to the cities of Judah and gather money from all Israel to repair the house of your God, year by year; and see that you act quickly." But the Levites did not act quickly. ⁶ So the king summoned Jehoiada the chief, and said to him, "Why have you not required the Levites to bring in from Judah and Jerusalem the tax levied by Moses, the servant of the LORD, on^a the congregation of Israel for the tent of the covenant?"^b ⁷ For the children of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken into the house of God, and had even used all the dedicated things of the house of the LORD for the Baals.

⁸ So the king gave command, and they made a chest, and set it outside the gate of the house of the LORD. ⁹ A proclamation was made throughout Judah and Jerusalem to bring in for the LORD the tax that Moses the servant of God laid on Israel in the wilderness. ¹⁰ All the leaders and all the people rejoiced and brought their tax and dropped it into the chest until it was full. ¹¹ Whenever the chest was brought to the king's officers by the Levites, when they saw that there was a large amount of money in it, the king's secretary and the officer of the chief priest would come and empty the chest and take it and return it to its place. So they did day after day, and collected money in abundance. ¹² The king and Jehoiada gave it to those who had charge of the work of the house of the LORD, and they hired masons and carpenters to restore the house of the LORD, and also workers in iron and bronze to repair the house of the LORD. ¹³ So those who were engaged in the work labored, and the repairing went forward at their hands, and they restored the house of God to its proper condition and strengthened it. ¹⁴ When they had finished, they brought the rest of the money to the king and Jehoiada, and with it were made utensils for the house of the LORD, utensils for the service and for the burnt offerings, and ladles, and vessels of gold and silver. They offered burnt offerings in the house of the LORD regularly all the days of Jehoiada.

Apostasy of Joash

¹⁵ But Jehoiada grew old and full of days, and died; he was one hundred thirty years old at his death. ¹⁶ And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, and for God and his house.

¹⁷ Now after the death of Jehoiada the officials of Judah came and did obeisance to the king; then the king listened to them. ¹⁸ They abandoned the house of the LORD, the God of their ancestors, and served the sacred poles^c and the idols. And wrath came upon Judah

^a Compare Vg: Heb and

^b Or *treaty*, or *testimony*; Heb *eduth*

^c Heb *Asherim*

and Jerusalem for this guilt of theirs. ¹⁹ Yet he sent prophets among them to bring them back to the LORD; they testified against them, but they would not listen.

²⁰ Then the spirit of God took possession of^a Zechariah son of the priest Jehoiada; he stood above the people and said to them, “Thus says God: Why do you transgress the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, he has also forsaken you.” ²¹ But they conspired against him, and by command of the king they stoned him to death in the court of the house of the LORD. ²² King Joash did not remember the kindness that Jehoiada, Zechariah’s father, had shown him, but killed his son. As he was dying, he said, “May the LORD see and avenge!”

Death of Joash

²³ At the end of the year the army of Aram came up against Joash. They came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all

the officials of the people from among them, and sent all the booty they took to the king of Damascus. ²⁴ Although the army of Aram had come with few men, the LORD delivered into their hand a very great army, because they had abandoned the LORD, the God of their ancestors. Thus they executed judgment on Joash.

²⁵ When they had withdrawn, leaving him severely wounded, his servants conspired against him because of the blood of the son^b of the priest Jehoiada, and they killed him on his bed. So he died; and they buried him in the city of David, but they did not bury him in the tombs of the kings. ²⁶ Those who conspired against him were Zabad son of Shimeath the Ammonite, and Jehozabad son of Shimrith the Moabite. ²⁷ Accounts of his sons, and of the many oracles against him, and of the rebuilding^c of the house of God are written in the Commentary on the Book of the Kings. And his son Amaziah succeeded him.

Reign of Amaziah

25 Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem. ² He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, yet not with a true heart. ³ As soon as the royal power was firmly in his hand he killed his servants who had murdered his father the king. ⁴ But he did not put their children to death, according to what is written in the law, in the book of Moses, where the LORD commanded, “The parents shall not be put to death for the children, or the children be put to death for the parents; but all shall be put to death for their own sins.”

Slaughter of the Edomites

⁵ Amaziah assembled the people of Judah, and set them by ancestral houses under commanders of the thousands and of the hundreds for all Judah and Benjamin. He mustered those twenty years old and upward, and found that they were three hundred thousand picked troops fit for war, able to handle spear and shield. ⁶ He also hired one hundred thousand mighty warriors from Israel for one hundred talents of silver. ⁷ But a man of God came to him and said, “O king, do not let the army of Israel go with you, for the LORD is not

^a Heb *clothed itself with*

^b Gk Vg: Heb *sons*

^c Heb *founding*

Read 2 Chronicles 25:1–16

The Davidic dynasty appeared unable to produce a king who would be faithful to his religious commitments. Upon his accession, Amaziah had his father's assassins executed. He then started a war of conquest against the Edomites, Judah's neighbor to the south and east. In a most unusual move, Amaziah worshiped the deities of the people he had defeated. An unnamed prophet denounced the king's apostasy.

Reflect: God demands total commitment. One cannot be half-hearted in the Lord's service. Is there anything or anyone preventing you from serving God completely? Perhaps you offer the principal obstacle.

Pray: Ask for the grace to give yourself totally to the following of Jesus. Half-measures and holding back will not do.

Act: As a sign of your total commitment to the Lord, choose some ministry of service: catechetical ministry, visiting the sick, youth ministry, choir. Give something extra to witness to your commitment.

with Israel—all these Ephraimites.⁸ Rather, go by yourself and act; be strong in battle, or God will fling you down before the enemy; for God has power to help or to overthrow.”⁹ Amaziah said to the man of God, “But what shall we do about the hundred talents that I have given to the army of Israel?” The man of God answered, “The LORD is able to give you much more than this.”¹⁰ Then Amaziah discharged the army that had come to him from Ephraim, letting them go home again. But they became very angry with Judah, and returned home in fierce anger.

11 Amaziah took courage, and led out his people; he went to the Valley of Salt, and struck down ten thousand men of Seir.¹² The people of Judah captured another ten thousand alive, took them to the top of Sela, and threw them down from the top of Sela, so that all of them were dashed to pieces.¹³ But the men of the army whom Amaziah sent back, not letting them go with him to battle, fell on the cities of Judah from Samaria to Beth-horon; they killed three thousand people in them, and took much booty.

14 Now after Amaziah came from the slaughter of the Edomites, he brought the gods of the people of Seir, set them up as his gods, and worshiped them, making offerings to them.¹⁵ The LORD was angry with Amaziah and sent to him a prophet, who said to him, “Why have you resorted to a people's gods who could not deliver their own people from your hand?”¹⁶ But as he was speaking the king^a said to him, “Have we made you a royal counselor? Stop! Why should you be put to death?” So the prophet stopped, but said, “I know that God has determined to destroy you, because you have done this and have not listened to my advice.”

Israel Defeats Judah

17 Then King Amaziah of Judah took counsel and sent to King Joash son of Jehoahaz son of Jehu of Israel, saying, “Come, let us look one another in the face.”¹⁸ King Joash of Israel sent word to King Amaziah of Judah, “A thornbush on Lebanon sent to a cedar on Lebanon, saying, ‘Give your daughter to my son for a wife’; but a wild animal of Lebanon passed by and trampled down the thornbush.¹⁹ You say, ‘See, I have defeated Edom,’ and your heart has lifted you up in boastfulness. Now stay at home; why should you provoke trouble so that you fall, you and Judah with you?”

20 But Amaziah would not listen—it was God's doing, in order to hand them over, because they had sought the gods of Edom.²¹ So King Joash of Israel went up; he and King Amaziah of Judah faced one another in battle at Beth-shemesh, which belongs to Ju-

^a Heb *he*

Read 2 Chronicles 25:17–28

Fresh from his victory over Edom, Amaziah challenged Israel. But Israel proved to be too formidable an enemy. Israel's army dismantled some of Jerusalem's defenses. The military defeat that Judah experienced likely caused economic problems. Amaziah's courtiers assassinated him, probably because the king had become so unpopular.

Reflect: War brings in its wake not only death and destruction but also grave economic problems—especially for the losing side. Christians need to teach the world about the way of nonviolence, despite the violent religious wars that are part of our past.

Pray: We ought to ask forgiveness for wars waged by Christians in the name of God. Of course, God wants all his children to live in peace. We pray in hope for the coming of lasting peace in the world.

Act: Consider interacting with members of your parish or in local inter-religious settings to pray for world peace and greater harmony among peoples and nations.

dah. ²² Judah was defeated by Israel; everyone fled home. ²³ King Joash of Israel captured King Amaziah of Judah, son of Joash, son of Ahaziah, at Beth-shemesh; he brought him to Jerusalem, and broke down the wall of Jerusalem from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate, a distance of four hundred cubits. ²⁴ He seized all the gold and silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of God, and Obed-edom with them; he seized also the treasuries of the king's house, also hostages; then he returned to Samaria.

Death of Amaziah

²⁵ King Amaziah son of Joash of Judah, lived fifteen years after the death of King Joash son of Jehoahaz of Israel. ²⁶ Now the rest of the deeds of Amaziah, from first to last, are they not written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel? ²⁷ From the time that Amaziah turned away from the LORD they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish. But they sent after him to Lachish, and killed him there. ²⁸ They brought him back on horses; he was buried with his ancestors in the city of David.

Reign of Uzziah

26 Then all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king to succeed his father Amaziah. ² He rebuilt Eloth and restored it to Judah, after the king slept with his ancestors. ³ Uzziah was sixteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jecoliah of Jerusalem. ⁴ He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, just as his father Amaziah had done. ⁵ He set himself to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God; and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him prosper.

⁶ He went out and made war against the Philistines, and broke down the wall of Gath and the wall of Jabneh and the wall of Ashdod; he built cities in the territory of Ashdod and elsewhere among the Philistines. ⁷ God helped him against the Philistines, against the Arabs who lived in Gur-baal, and against the Meunites. ⁸ The Ammonites paid tribute to Uzziah, and his fame spread even to the border of Egypt, for he became very strong. ⁹ Moreover Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, at the Valley Gate, and at the Angle, and fortified them. ¹⁰ He built towers in the wilderness and hewed out many cisterns, for he had large herds, both in the Shephelah and in the plain, and he had farmers and vinedressers in the hills and in the fertile lands, for he loved the soil. ¹¹ Moreover Uzziah had an army of

Read 2 Chronicles 26

Uzziah was not known for his carrying out of his religious duties; rather, he was a builder and a general. He was successful both on the home front and in war. He got in trouble by usurping the prerogatives of the priests to offer sacrifice. When he developed a serious skin disease, however, laws of purity forbade him entrance into the temple. Perhaps fear of this disease kept any potential assassins away.

Reflect: No matter what our achievements in life, we will be failures unless we give proper attention to our religious responsibilities. We cannot act as though God does not exist or God is not concerned about our moral choices.

Pray: Be careful not to neglect your religious commitments. Daily prayer stands at the center of those commitments. Prayer keeps us connected to God.

Act: Make a list of your priorities. Be honest and specific. Where are your religious commitments on that list? Why are they in that particular position?

soldiers, fit for war, in divisions according to the numbers in the muster made by the secretary Jeiel and the officer Maaseiah, under the direction of Hananiah, one of the king's commanders. ¹² The whole number of the heads of ancestral houses of mighty warriors was two thousand six hundred. ¹³ Under their command was an army of three hundred seven thousand five hundred, who could make war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy. ¹⁴ Uzziah provided for all the army the shields, spears, helmets, coats of mail, bows, and stones for slinging. ¹⁵ In Jerusalem he set up machines, invented by skilled workers, on the towers and the corners for shooting arrows and large stones. And his fame spread far, for he was marvelously helped until he became strong.

Pride and Apostasy

¹⁶ But when he had become strong he grew proud, to his destruction. For he was false to the LORD his God, and entered the temple of the LORD to make offering on the altar of incense. ¹⁷ But the priest Azariah went in after him, with eighty priests of the LORD who were men of valor; ¹⁸ they withstood King Uzziah, and said to him, "It is not for you, Uzziah, to make offering to the LORD, but for the priests the descendants of Aaron, who are consecrated to make offering. Go out of the sanctuary; for you have done wrong, and it will bring you no honor from the LORD God." ¹⁹ Then Uzziah was angry. Now he had a censer in his hand to make offering, and when he became angry with the priests a leprous^a disease broke out on his forehead, in the presence of the priests in the house of the LORD, by the altar of incense. ²⁰ When the chief priest Azariah, and all the priests, looked at him, he was leprous^a in his forehead. They hurried him out, and he himself hurried to get out, because the LORD had struck him. ²¹ King Uzziah was leprous^a to the day of his death, and being leprous^a lived in a separate house, for he was excluded from the house of the LORD. His son Jotham was in charge of the palace of the king, governing the people of the land.

²² Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, from first to last, the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz wrote. ²³ Uzziah slept with his ancestors; they buried him near his ancestors in the burial field that belonged to the kings, for they said, "He is leprous."^a His son Jotham succeeded him.

Reign of Jotham

27 Jotham was twenty-five years old when he began to reign; he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jerushah daughter of

^a A term for several skin diseases; precise meaning uncertain

Read 2 Chronicles 27

The reign of Jotham was an improvement over that of his immediate predecessors. Like his father, Jotham was a builder. He also enjoyed military success against the Ammonites. However, he failed to provide the type of leadership that was needed by the people of Judah (v. 2).

Reflect: Do we consider our faith a private affair that need not “intrude” into our relationships? Do we witness to our belief in Jesus? Do we encourage others to practice their faith?

Pray: Our prayer ought to lead us to witness. Prayer is not an escape from the responsibilities of discipleship; rather, it impels us to mission.

Act: Look for opportunities to encourage others in the faith. Participate in parish ministries that call lapsed Catholics back home.

Read 2 Chronicles 28:1–7

King Ahaz participated in and promoted religious practices contrary to traditional Israelite practices. He encouraged the worship of the Canaanite deity, Baal. The Chronicler attributes his defeat by the combined forces of Israel and Aram to his apostasy. This defeat touched Ahaz personally, for his son was killed in the conflict.

Reflect: We need to make our relationship with God the integrating force in our lives. Neglecting this relationship will invariably bring chaos into the rest of our lives. Focusing on our relationship with God gives our lives meaning and purpose.

Pray: Prayer can give meaning to our lives by focusing our attention on our commitment to God. Prayer allows us to cast our cares upon God who wants only what is best for us.

Zadok. ² He did what was right in the sight of the LORD just as his father Uzziah had done—only he did not invade the temple of the LORD. But the people still followed corrupt practices. ³ He built the upper gate of the house of the LORD, and did extensive building on the wall of Ophel. ⁴ Moreover he built cities in the hill country of Judah, and forts and towers on the wooded hills. ⁵ He fought with the king of the Ammonites and prevailed against them. The Ammonites gave him that year one hundred talents of silver, ten thousand cors of wheat and ten thousand of barley. The Ammonites paid him the same amount in the second and the third years. ⁶ So Jotham became strong because he ordered his ways before the LORD his God. ⁷ Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all his wars and his ways, are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah. ⁸ He was twenty-five years old when he began to reign; he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. ⁹ Jotham slept with his ancestors, and they buried him in the city of David; and his son Ahaz succeeded him.

Reign of Ahaz

28 Ahaz was twenty years old when he began to reign; he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. He did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD, as his ancestor David had done, ² but he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. He even made cast images for the Baals; ³ and he made offerings in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and made his sons pass through fire, according to the abominable practices of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. ⁴ He sacrificed and made offerings on the high places, on the hills, and under every green tree.

Aram and Israel Defeat Judah

⁵ Therefore the LORD his God gave him into the hand of the king of Aram, who defeated him and took captive a great number of his people and brought them to Damascus. He was also given into the hand of the king of Israel, who defeated him with great slaughter. ⁶ Pekah son of Remaliah killed one hundred twenty thousand in Judah in one day, all of them valiant warriors, because they had abandoned the LORD, the God of their ancestors. ⁷ And Zichri, a mighty warrior of Ephraim, killed the king's son Maaseiah, Azrikam the commander of the palace, and Elkanah the next in authority to the king.

Intervention of Oded

⁸ The people of Israel took captive two hundred thousand of their kin, women, sons, and daughters;

Act: Invest time in your relationship with God. A few days of retreat can help you center your life on God. This will help you set priorities and order your commitments.

Read 2 Chronicles 28:8–15

The people of the two Israelite kingdoms shared the same material culture, language, and religious traditions. But the two kingdoms were rivals. The kingdom of Israel defeated Ahaz of Judah and the Israelite army took captives and booty from defeated Judah. The prophet Oded warns Israel that it has exceeded the bounds of propriety in taking advantage of the Judahites. Several of Israel's military leaders heard and obeyed the prophet's word.

Reflect: The gospel calls believers to recognize that we are all brothers and sisters and that we all have one Father. This should impel us to treat every person as a child of God. The church's social teachings are based on this gospel imperative.

Pray: Our prayers of intercession should focus on our brothers and sisters who have special needs in their lives.

Act: Devote some of your time, talent, and treasure to organizations that seek to meet the needs of poor people—people without the basic necessities of life.

they also took much booty from them and brought the booty to Samaria. ⁹ But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name was Oded; he went out to meet the army that came to Samaria, and said to them, "Because the LORD, the God of your ancestors, was angry with Judah, he gave them into your hand, but you have killed them in a rage that has reached up to heaven. ¹⁰ Now you intend to subjugate the people of Judah and Jerusalem, male and female, as your slaves. But what have you except sins against the LORD your God? ¹¹ Now hear me, and send back the captives whom you have taken from your kindred, for the fierce wrath of the LORD is upon you." ¹² Moreover, certain chiefs of the Ephraimites, Azariah son of Johanan, Berechiah son of Meshillemoth, Jehizkiah son of Shallum, and Amasa son of Hadlai, stood up against those who were coming from the war, ¹³ and said to them, "You shall not bring the captives in here, for you propose to bring on us guilt against the LORD in addition to our present sins and guilt. For our guilt is already great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel." ¹⁴ So the warriors left the captives and the booty before the officials and all the assembly. ¹⁵ Then those who were mentioned by name got up and took the captives, and with the booty they clothed all that were naked among them; they clothed them, gave them sandals, provided them with food and drink, and anointed them; and carrying all the feeble among them on donkeys, they brought them to their kindred at Jericho, the city of palm trees. Then they returned to Samaria.

Assyria Refuses to Help Judah

16 At that time King Ahaz sent to the king^a of Assyria for help. ¹⁷ For the Edomites had again invaded and defeated Judah, and carried away captives. ¹⁸ And the Philistines had made raids on the cities in the Shephelah and the Negeb of Judah, and had taken Bethshemesh, Aijalon, Gederoth, Soco with its villages, Timnah with its villages, and Gimzo with its villages; and they settled there. ¹⁹ For the LORD brought Judah low because of King Ahaz of Israel, for he had behaved without restraint in Judah and had been faithless to the LORD. ²⁰ So King Tilgath-pilneser of Assyria came against him, and oppressed him instead of strengthening him. ²¹ For Ahaz plundered the house of the LORD and the houses of the king and of the officials, and gave tribute to the king of Assyria; but it did not help him.

Apostasy and Death of Ahaz

22 In the time of his distress he became yet more faithless to the LORD—this same King Ahaz. ²³ For he

^a Gk Syr Vg Compare 2 Kings 16.7: Heb *kings*

Read 2 Chronicles 28:16–27

To protect himself from Aram and Israel who were allied against Judah, Ahaz sought help from the Assyrian Empire. He went so far as to raid the temple's treasury in order to get Assyria's help. The Assyrians needed no invitation. They had their own plans for Israel and Judah. In his desperation, Ahaz slipped deeper into the worship of foreign deities.

Reflect: Ahaz had real problems, but he sought solutions in the wrong places. The one constant in our lives must be living out our commitment to God. Abandoning God will never help things work out.

Pray: Ask God for the confidence that allows us to keep faith in God in the most difficult of circumstances. Without this confidence and faith, we will lose the way to our truest happiness.

Act: We cannot always rely on our own resources. In difficult times, let us ask for the help of a spiritual director who can help us in our walk with God.

sacrificed to the gods of Damascus, which had defeated him, and said, "Because the gods of the kings of Aram helped them, I will sacrifice to them so that they may help me." But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel. ²⁴ Ahaz gathered together the utensils of the house of God, and cut in pieces the utensils of the house of God. He shut up the doors of the house of the LORD and made himself altars in every corner of Jerusalem. ²⁵ In every city of Judah he made high places to make offerings to other gods, provoking to anger the LORD, the God of his ancestors. ²⁶ Now the rest of his acts and all his ways, from first to last, are written in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. ²⁷ Ahaz slept with his ancestors, and they buried him in the city, in Jerusalem; but they did not bring him into the tombs of the kings of Israel. His son Hezekiah succeeded him.

Reign of Hezekiah

29 Hezekiah began to reign when he was twenty-five years old; he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abijah daughter of Zechariah. ² He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, just as his ancestor David had done.

The Temple Cleansed

³ In the first year of his reign, in the first month, he opened the doors of the house of the LORD and repaired them. ⁴ He brought in the priests and the Levites and assembled them in the square on the east. ⁵ He said to them, "Listen to me, Levites! Sanctify yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD, the God of your ancestors, and carry out the filth from the holy place. ⁶ For our ancestors have been unfaithful and have done what was evil in the sight of the LORD our God; they have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the dwelling of the LORD, and turned their backs. ⁷ They also shut the doors of the vestibule and put out the lamps, and have not offered incense or made burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel. ⁸ Therefore the wrath of the LORD came upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he has made them an object of horror, of astonishment, and of hissing, as you see with your own eyes. ⁹ Our fathers have fallen by the sword and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this. ¹⁰ Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the LORD, the God of Israel, so that his fierce anger may turn away from us. ¹¹ My sons, do not now be negligent, for the LORD has chosen you to stand in his presence to minister to him, and to be his ministers and make offerings to him."

¹² Then the Levites arose, Mahath son of Amasai,

Read 2 Chronicles 29

The Chronicler remembers Hezekiah as one of the best kings of Judah. Hezekiah took steps to rid the temple of all foreign accouterments, reorganize the temple's personnel, and renew sacrificial worship of God alone in Jerusalem's temple.

Reflect: The worship of the Lord is one of our fundamental duties as Christians. We need to be particularly concerned about the quality of the community's worship.

Pray: Consider active participation in the liturgy as one of your greatest and most fundamental responsibilities as a Christian. Make the prayer of the church your prayer.

Act: Volunteer for one of your parish's liturgical ministries: reader, leader of song, choir member, greeter and usher, extraordinary minister of the Eucharist. Use your talents to enhance the beauty of the community's worship.

and Joel son of Azariah, of the sons of the Kohathites; and of the sons of Merari, Kish son of Abdi, and Azariah son of Jehallelel; and of the Gershonites, Joah son of Zimmah, and Eden son of Joah; ¹³ and of the sons of Elizaphan, Shimri and Jeuel; and of the sons of Asaph, Zechariah and Mattaniah; ¹⁴ and of the sons of Heman, Jehuel and Shimei; and of the sons of Jeduthun, She-maiah and Uzziel. ¹⁵ They gathered their brothers, sanctified themselves, and went in as the king had commanded, by the words of the LORD, to cleanse the house of the LORD. ¹⁶ The priests went into the inner part of the house of the LORD to cleanse it, and they brought out all the unclean things that they found in the temple of the LORD into the court of the house of the LORD; and the Levites took them and carried them out to the Wadi Kidron. ¹⁷ They began to sanctify on the first day of the first month, and on the eighth day of the month they came to the vestibule of the LORD; then for eight days they sanctified the house of the LORD, and on the sixteenth day of the first month they finished. ¹⁸ Then they went inside to King Hezekiah and said, "We have cleansed all the house of the LORD, the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the table for the rows of bread and all its utensils. ¹⁹ All the utensils that King Ahaz repudiated during his reign when he was faithless, we have made ready and sanctified; see, they are in front of the altar of the LORD."

Temple Worship Restored

²⁰ Then King Hezekiah rose early, assembled the officials of the city, and went up to the house of the LORD. ²¹ They brought seven bulls, seven rams, seven lambs, and seven male goats for a sin offering for the kingdom and for the sanctuary and for Judah. He commanded the priests the descendants of Aaron to offer them on the altar of the LORD. ²² So they slaughtered the bulls, and the priests received the blood and dashed it against the altar; they slaughtered the rams and their blood was dashed against the altar; they also slaughtered the lambs and their blood was dashed against the altar. ²³ Then the male goats for the sin offering were brought to the king and the assembly; they laid their hands on them, ²⁴ and the priests slaughtered them and made a sin offering with their blood at the altar, to make atonement for all Israel. For the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel.

²⁵ He stationed the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, harps, and lyres, according to the commandment of David and of Gad the king's seer and of the prophet Nathan, for the commandment was from

the LORD through his prophets. ²⁶ The Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. ²⁷ Then Hezekiah commanded that the burnt offering be offered on the altar. When the burnt offering began, the song to the LORD began also, and the trumpets, accompanied by the instruments of King David of Israel. ²⁸ The whole assembly worshiped, the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded; all this continued until the burnt offering was finished. ²⁹ When the offering was finished, the king and all who were present with him bowed down and worshiped. ³⁰ King Hezekiah and the officials commanded the Levites to sing praises to the LORD with the words of David and of the seer Asaph. They sang praises with gladness, and they bowed down and worshiped.

³¹ Then Hezekiah said, "You have now consecrated yourselves to the LORD; come near, bring sacrifices and thank offerings to the house of the LORD." The assembly

brought sacrifices and thank offerings; and all who were of a willing heart brought burnt offerings. ³² The number of the burnt offerings that the assembly brought was seventy bulls, one hundred rams, and two hundred lambs; all these were for a burnt offering to the LORD. ³³ The consecrated offerings were six hundred bulls and three thousand sheep. ³⁴ But the priests were too few and could not skin all the burnt offerings, so, until other priests had sanctified themselves, their kindred, the Levites, helped them until the work was finished—for the Levites were more conscientious^a than the priests in sanctifying themselves. ³⁵ Besides the great number of burnt offerings there was the fat of the offerings of well-being, and there were the drink offerings for the burnt offerings. Thus the service of the house of the LORD was restored. ³⁶ And Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced because of what God had done for the people; for the thing had come about suddenly.

The Great Passover

30 Hezekiah sent word to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the passover to the LORD the God of Israel. ² For the king and his officials and all the assembly in Jerusalem had taken counsel to keep the passover in the second month ³ (for they could not keep it at its proper time because the priests had not sanctified themselves in sufficient number, nor had the people assembled in Jerusalem). ⁴ The plan seemed right to the king and all the assembly. ⁵ So they decreed to make a proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beer-sheba to Dan, that the people should come and keep the passover to the LORD the God of Israel, at Jerusalem; for they had not kept it in great numbers as prescribed. ⁶ So couriers went throughout all Israel and Judah with letters from the king and his officials, as the king had commanded, saying, "O people of Israel, return to the LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, so that he may turn again to the remnant of you who have escaped from the hand of the kings of Assyria. ⁷ Do not be like your ancestors and your kindred, who were faithless to the LORD God of their ancestors, so that he made them a desolation, as you see. ⁸ Do not now be

^a Heb *upright in heart*

Read 2 Chronicles 30:1—31:1

The feast of Passover connected the worshipers of Yahweh with their origins as a nation and with the origins of their religious traditions. Hezekiah ordered the Passover to be celebrated to reconnect the people of Judah with their God. The people of the kingdom of Israel refused to participate. In Judah, however, Hezekiah's plans enjoyed great success.

Reflect: The celebration of the church's liturgical year serves to connect us with the person and work of Jesus. Participation in the liturgy ensures that we connect with the Jesus of the gospels rather than the Jesus of pious imagination.

Pray: Use the prayers of the liturgy as sources for your personal, meditative prayer.

Act: Become more familiar with liturgical piety. Read the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.

stiff-necked as your ancestors were, but yield yourselves to the LORD and come to his sanctuary, which he has sanctified forever, and serve the LORD your God, so that his fierce anger may turn away from you. ⁹For as you return to the LORD, your kindred and your children will find compassion with their captors, and return to this land. For the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if you return to him."

¹⁰ So the couriers went from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, and as far as Zebulun; but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them. ¹¹ Only a few from Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem. ¹² The hand of God was also on Judah to give them one heart to do what the king and the officials commanded by the word of the LORD.

¹³ Many people came together in Jerusalem to keep the festival of unleavened bread in the second month, a very large assembly. ¹⁴ They set to work and removed the altars that were in Jerusalem, and all the altars for offering incense they took away and threw into the Wadi Kidron. ¹⁵ They slaughtered the passover lamb on the fourteenth day of the second month. The priests and the Levites were ashamed, and they sanctified themselves and brought burnt offerings into the house of the LORD. ¹⁶ They took their accustomed posts according to the law of Moses the man of God; the priests dashed the blood that they received^a from the hands of the Levites. ¹⁷ For there were many in the assembly who had not sanctified themselves; therefore the Levites had to slaughter the passover lamb for everyone who was not clean, to make it holy to the LORD. ¹⁸ For a multitude of the people, many of them from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet they ate the passover otherwise than as prescribed. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, "The good LORD pardon all ¹⁹ who set their hearts to seek God, the LORD the God of their ancestors, even though not in accordance with the sanctuary's rules of cleanness." ²⁰ The LORD heard Hezekiah, and healed the people. ²¹ The people of Israel who were present at Jerusalem kept the festival of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness; and the Levites and the priests praised the LORD day by day, accompanied by loud instruments for the LORD. ²² Hezekiah spoke encouragingly to all the Levites who showed good skill in the service of the LORD. So the people ate the food of the festival for seven days, sacrificing offerings of well-being and giving thanks to the LORD the God of their ancestors.

²³ Then the whole assembly agreed together to

^a Heb lacks *that they received*

keep the festival for another seven days; so they kept it for another seven days with gladness. ²⁴ For King Hezekiah of Judah gave the assembly a thousand bulls and seven thousand sheep for offerings, and the officials gave the assembly a thousand bulls and ten thousand sheep. The priests sanctified themselves in great numbers. ²⁵ The whole assembly of Judah, the priests and the Levites, and the whole assembly

that came out of Israel, and the resident aliens who came out of the land of Israel, and the resident aliens who lived in Judah, rejoiced. ²⁶ There was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the time of Solomon son of King David of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem. ²⁷ Then the priests and the Levites stood up and blessed the people, and their voice was heard; their prayer came to his holy dwelling in heaven.

Read 2 Chronicles 31:2–21

Ancient Israel's cultic personnel did not own land. They depended on offerings and tithes to the temple for the support of themselves and their families. Hezekiah saw to it that the provisions for the support of the priests and Levites were sufficient for their needs.

Reflect: The church's mission, its social and charitable outreach, and the support of the clergy depend upon the generosity of the Christian faithful. It is the responsibility of the faithful to support the church, and it is the responsibility of the clergy to ensure that the offerings made by the people are used for the purposes intended.

Pray: Make prayer the context for setting priorities for your charitable giving. Ask God to lead you to share with those in need—not just out of your surplus but out of your own need.

Act: Become involved in your parish council, helping to set priorities for the parish's expenditures. Be ready to ask your fellow parishioners to make their proper contribution to the parish.

Pagan Shrines Destroyed

31 Now when all this was finished, all Israel who were present went out to the cities of Judah and broke down the pillars, hewed down the sacred poles,^a and pulled down the high places and the altars throughout all Judah and Benjamin, and in Ephraim and Manasseh, until they had destroyed them all. Then all the people of Israel returned to their cities, all to their individual properties.

2 Hezekiah appointed the divisions of the priests and of the Levites, division by division, everyone according to his service, the priests and the Levites, for burnt offerings and offerings of well-being, to minister in the gates of the camp of the LORD and to give thanks and praise. ³ The contribution of the king from his own possessions was for the burnt offerings: the burnt offerings of morning and evening, and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths, the new moons, and the appointed festivals, as it is written in the law of the LORD. ⁴ He commanded the people who lived in Jerusalem to give the portion due to the priests and the Levites, so that they might devote themselves to the law of the LORD. ⁵ As soon as the word spread, the people of Israel gave in abundance the first fruits of grain, wine, oil, honey, and of all the produce of the field; and they brought in abundantly the tithe of everything. ⁶ The people of Israel and Judah who lived in the cities of Judah also brought in the tithe of cattle and sheep, and the tithe of the dedicated things that had been consecrated to the LORD their God, and laid them in heaps. ⁷ In the third month they began to pile up the heaps, and finished them in the seventh month. ⁸ When Hezekiah and the officials came and saw the heaps, they blessed the LORD and his people Israel. ⁹ Hezekiah questioned the priests and the Levites about the heaps. ¹⁰ The chief priest Azariah, who was of the house of Zadok, answered him, "Since they began to bring the contributions into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat and have plenty to spare; for the LORD has blessed his people, so that we have this great supply left over."

^a Heb *Asherim*

Reorganization of Priests and Levites

11 Then Hezekiah commanded them to prepare store-chambers in the house of the LORD; and they prepared them. ¹² Faithfully they brought in the contributions, the tithes and the dedicated things. The chief officer in charge of them was Conaniah the Levite, with his brother Shimei as second; ¹³ while Jehiel, Azariah, Nahath, Asahel, Jerimoth, Jozabad, Eliel, Ismachiah, Mahath, and Benaiah were overseers assisting Conaniah and his brother Shimei, by the appointment of King Hezekiah and of Azariah the chief officer of the house of God. ¹⁴ Kore son of Imnah the Levite, keeper of the east gate, was in charge of the freewill offerings to God, to apportion the contribution reserved for the LORD and the most holy offerings. ¹⁵ Eden, Miniamin, Jeshua, Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah were faithfully assisting him in the cities of the priests, to distribute the portions to their kindred, old and young alike, by divisions, ¹⁶ except those enrolled by genealogy, males from three years old and upwards, all who entered the

house of the LORD as the duty of each day required, for their service according to their offices, by their divisions. ¹⁷ The enrollment of the priests was according to their ancestral houses; that of the Levites from twenty years old and upwards was according to their offices, by their divisions. ¹⁸ The priests were enrolled with all their little children, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, the whole multitude; for they were faithful in keeping themselves holy. ¹⁹ And for the descendants of Aaron, the priests, who were in the fields of common land belonging to their towns, town by town, the people designated by name were to distribute portions to every male among the priests and to everyone among the Levites who was enrolled.

²⁰ Hezekiah did this throughout all Judah; he did what was good and right and faithful before the LORD his God. ²¹ And every work that he undertook in the service of the house of God, and in accordance with the law and the commandments, to seek his God, he did with all his heart; and he prospered.

Sennacherib's Invasion

32 After these things and these acts of faithfulness, King Sennacherib of Assyria came and invaded Judah and encamped against the fortified cities, thinking to win them for himself. ² When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and intended to fight against Jerusalem, ³ he planned with his officers and his warriors to stop the flow of the springs that were outside the city; and they helped him. ⁴ A great many people were gathered, and they stopped all the springs and the wadi that flowed through the land, saying, "Why should the Assyrian kings come and find water in abundance?" ⁵ Hezekiah^a set to work resolutely and built up the entire wall that was broken down, and raised towers on it,^b and outside it he built another wall; he also strengthened the Millo in the city of David, and made weapons and shields in abundance. ⁶ He appointed combat commanders over the people, and gathered them together to him in the square at the gate of the city and spoke encouragingly to them, saying, ⁷ "Be strong and of good courage. Do not be afraid or dismayed before the king of Assyria and all the horde that is with him; for there is one greater with us than with him. ⁸ With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our God, to help

^a Heb *He*

^b Vg: Heb *and raised on the towers*

Read 2 Chronicles 32:1–23

The Assyrians were intent on reestablishing their empire. They sought to control all of the ancient Near East. Judah was a small but essential part of their plan to achieve hegemony. The plans of the Assyrians were succeeding until they got to Jerusalem. Their siege of the city failed. The Chronicler credits that to the power of Judah's God.

Reflect: A country's foreign policy must not be based on securing influence and power over other nations. It must be based on justice. Offensive wars are the result of a country's setting self-interest above the demands of equity and justice.

Pray: Praying for one's country is one way in which believers express their patriotism. Pray that the country's foreign policy may be based on seeking justice through nonviolence.

Act: Become an active participant in the political process so that you can bring the gospel's values to bear upon the country's policies.

us and to fight our battles." The people were encouraged by the words of King Hezekiah of Judah.

9 After this, while King Sennacherib of Assyria was at Lachish with all his forces, he sent his servants to Jerusalem to King Hezekiah of Judah and to all the people of Judah that were in Jerusalem, saying, ¹⁰ "Thus says King Sennacherib of Assyria: On what are you relying, that you undergo the siege of Jerusalem? ¹¹ Is not Hezekiah misleading you, handing you over to die by famine and by thirst, when he tells you, 'The LORD our God will save us from the hand of the king of Assyria'? ¹² Was it not this same Hezekiah who took away his high places and his altars and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, saying, 'Before one altar you shall worship, and upon it you shall make your offerings'? ¹³ Do you not know what I and my ancestors have done to all the peoples of other lands? Were the gods of the nations of those lands at all able to save their lands out of my hand? ¹⁴ Who among all the gods of those nations that my ancestors utterly destroyed was able to save his people from my hand, that your God should be able to save you from my hand? ¹⁵ Now therefore do not let Hezekiah deceive you or mislead you in this fashion, and do not believe him, for no god of any nation or kingdom has been able to save his people from my hand or from the hand of my ancestors. How much less will your God save you out of my hand!"

16 His servants said still more against the Lord God and against his servant Hezekiah. ¹⁷ He also wrote letters to throw contempt on the LORD the God of Israel and to speak against him, saying, "Just as the gods of the nations in other lands did not rescue their people from my hands, so the God of Hezekiah will not rescue his people from my hand." ¹⁸ They shouted it with a loud voice in the language of Judah to the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall, to frighten and terrify them, in order that they might take the city. ¹⁹ They spoke of the God of Jerusalem as if he were like the gods of the peoples of the earth, which are the work of human hands.

Sennacherib's Defeat and Death

20 Then King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz prayed because of this and cried to heaven. ²¹ And the LORD sent an angel who cut off all the mighty warriors and commanders and officers in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned in disgrace to his own land. When he came into the house of his god, some of his own sons struck him down there with the sword. ²² So the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of King Sennacherib

Read 2 Chronicles 32:24–33

The Chronicler describes Hezekiah's wealth and building projects as a way of showing that God rewarded his fidelity, even though the incident of Hezekiah's sickness shows that the king was nonetheless a proud person. This was a stumbling block in his relationship to God.

Reflect: We need to remember that all we are, all we have, and all we accomplish come from God. If we ignore this reality, we stand in danger of losing it all.

Pray: We ought to thank God every day for the gifts we have received from God's hands—gifts that we humbly accept and gratefully acknowledge.

Act: We acknowledge our dependence on God's generosity by being generous with others. Examine your financial status to determine how much of a help you can be to your brothers and sisters in need.

of Assyria and from the hand of all his enemies; he gave them rest^a on every side. ²³ Many brought gifts to the LORD in Jerusalem and precious things to King Hezekiah of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations from that time onward.

Hezekiah's Sickness

²⁴ In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death. He prayed to the LORD, and he answered him and gave him a sign. ²⁵ But Hezekiah did not respond according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was proud. Therefore wrath came upon him and upon Judah and Jerusalem. ²⁶ Then Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah.

Hezekiah's Prosperity and Achievements

²⁷ Hezekiah had very great riches and honor; and he made for himself treasuries for silver, for gold, for precious stones, for spices, for shields, and for all kinds of costly objects; ²⁸ storehouses also for the yield of grain, wine, and oil; and stalls for all kinds of cattle, and sheepfolds.^b ²⁹ He likewise provided cities for himself, and flocks and herds in abundance; for God had given him very great possessions. ³⁰ This same Hezekiah closed the upper outlet of the waters of Gihon and directed them down to the west side of the city of David. Hezekiah prospered in all his works. ³¹ So also in the matter of the envoys of the officials of Babylon, who had been sent to him to inquire about the sign that had been done in the land, God left him to himself, in order to test him and to know all that was in his heart.

³² Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his good deeds, are written in the vision of the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz in the Book of the Kings of Judah and Israel. ³³ Hezekiah slept with his ancestors, and they buried him on the ascent to the tombs of the descendants of David; and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honor at his death. His son Manasseh succeeded him.

Reign of Manasseh

33 Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign; he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. ² He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominable practices of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel. ³ For he rebuilt the high places that his father Hezekiah had pulled down, and erected altars to the Baals, made sacred poles,^c worshiped all the host of heaven, and served

^a Gk Vg: Heb *guided them*

^b Gk Vg: Heb *flocks for folds*

^c Heb *Asheroth*

Read 2 Chronicles 33

Manasseh reversed the policies of his father, Hezekiah. He promoted non-Israelite forms of worship to demonstrate his subservience to Assyria, which, in his opinion, controlled Judah's destiny. The Chronicler, however, presents Manasseh as a model of repentance—a model that Amon, his son and successor, unfortunately did not follow. Amon was assassinated by his own courtiers.

Reflect: We are called to continual conversion. There is never a moment in our life with God when we can say that we have done all that God could expect of us. We are always being called to greater obedience and generosity.

Pray: It is in prayer that we become aware of our need for conversion. Through prayer, we learn to be honest with ourselves, asking for God's mercy and forgiveness.

Act: Assess your own need for conversion. Cultivate a healthy sense of self-criticism, one capable of asking what more you can do for the Lord.

them. ⁴ He built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, "In Jerusalem shall my name be forever." ⁵ He built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. ⁶ He made his son pass through fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom, practiced soothsaying and augury and sorcery, and dealt with mediums and with wizards. He did much evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger. ⁷ The carved image of the idol that he had made he set in the house of God, of which God said to David and to his son Solomon, "In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my name forever; ⁸ I will never again remove the feet of Israel from the land that I appointed for your ancestors, if only they will be careful to do all that I have commanded them, all the law, the statutes, and the ordinances given through Moses." ⁹ Manasseh misled Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that they did more evil than the nations whom the LORD had destroyed before the people of Israel.

Manasseh Restored after Repentance

10 The LORD spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they gave no heed. ¹¹ Therefore the LORD brought against them the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh captive in manacles, bound him with fetters, and brought him to Babylon. ¹² While he was in distress he entreated the favor of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors. ¹³ He prayed to him, and God received his entreaty, heard his plea, and restored him again to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD indeed was God.

14 Afterward he built an outer wall for the city of David west of Gihon, in the valley, reaching the entrance at the Fish Gate; he carried it around Ophel, and raised it to a very great height. He also put commanders of the army in all the fortified cities in Judah. ¹⁵ He took away the foreign gods and the idol from the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built on the mountain of the house of the LORD and in Jerusalem, and he threw them out of the city. ¹⁶ He also restored the altar of the LORD and offered on it sacrifices of well-being and of thanksgiving; and he commanded Judah to serve the LORD the God of Israel. ¹⁷ The people, however, still sacrificed at the high places, but only to the LORD their God.

Death of Manasseh

18 Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, his prayer to his God, and the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, these are in the

Annals of the Kings of Israel. ¹⁹ His prayer, and how God received his entreaty, all his sin and his faithlessness, the sites on which he built high places and set up the sacred poles^a and the images, before he humbled himself, these are written in the records of the seers.^b ²⁰ So Manasseh slept with his ancestors, and they buried him in his house. His son Amon succeeded him.

Amon's Reign and Death

²¹ Amon was twenty-two years old when he began to reign; he reigned two years in

Jerusalem. ²² He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, as his father Manasseh had done. Amon sacrificed to all the images that his father Manasseh had made, and served them. ²³ He did not humble himself before the LORD, as his father Manasseh had humbled himself, but this Amon incurred more and more guilt. ²⁴ His servants conspired against him and killed him in his house. ²⁵ But the people of the land killed all those who had conspired against King Amon; and the people of the land made his son Josiah king to succeed him.

Read 2 Chronicles 34:1–7

Like Hezekiah, his great-grandfather, Josiah is remembered for purging Judah's communal worship from the kind of foreign practices that his predecessors introduced as a way to curry the favor of their Assyrian overlords. But Josiah did not limit his efforts to Judah; his reform also reached into the territory of the former kingdom of Israel.

Reflect: Josiah is praised for following the example of David. Who are our models as we walk through life? Whom do we admire and whose example do we follow?

Pray: The church must always be reformed. Pray for those who call for reform and those who need to hear this call so that the church may offer a credible and effective witness to the world.

Act: Become familiar with those aspects of the church's life that are in need of reform. Support the efforts of prophetic voices that call for reform.

Reign of Josiah

34 Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign; he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. ² He did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of his ancestor David; he did not turn aside to the right or to the left. ³ For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still a boy, he began to seek the God of his ancestor David, and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the sacred poles,^a and the carved and the cast images. ⁴ In his presence they pulled down the altars of the Baals; he demolished the incense altars that stood above them. He broke down the sacred poles^a and the carved and the cast images; he made dust of them and scattered it over the graves of those who had sacrificed to them. ⁵ He also burned the bones of the priests on their altars, and purged Judah and Jerusalem. ⁶ In the towns of Manasseh, Ephraim, and Simeon, and as far as Naphtali, in their ruins^c all around, ⁷ he broke down the altars, beat the sacred poles^a and the images into powder, and demolished all the incense altars throughout all the land of Israel. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

Discovery of the Book of the Law

⁸ In the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land and the house, he sent Shaphan son of Azaliah, Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah son of Joahaz, the recorder, to repair the house of the LORD his God. ⁹ They came to the high priest Hilkiah and delivered the money that had been brought into the house of God, which the Levites, the keepers of the threshold, had collected from Manasseh and Ephraim and from all the remnant of Israel and from all Judah and Benjamin and from the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ¹⁰ They delivered it to the workers who had the over-

^a Heb *Asherim*

^b One Ms Gk: MT of *Hozai*

^c Meaning of Heb uncertain

Read 2 Chronicles 34:8–33

In the course of repair work being done on the temple, a text was found. It contained some of Judah's religious traditions that had fallen from the nation's collective memory. The king had the text authenticated by a prophet and then used it as a basis for calling the people of Judah to renew their covenant with God.

Reflect: How familiar are we with the traditions of the Catholic faith? Do we give shape to our conversion today on the basis of the traditions that we have inherited from our forebears in the faith?

Pray: Pray for receptiveness to the correction that the church's tradition can offer to your personal beliefs and practices. Thank God for the guidance of the church and its tradition in your life of faith.

Act: Resolve to reacquaint yourself with the church's tradition. Start with the scriptures. Participate in a Bible study group in your parish.

sight of the house of the LORD, and the workers who were working in the house of the LORD gave it for repairing and restoring the house. ¹¹ They gave it to the carpenters and the builders to buy quarried stone, and timber for binders, and beams for the buildings that the kings of Judah had let go to ruin. ¹² The people did the work faithfully. Over them were appointed the Levites Jahath and Obadiah, of the sons of Merari, along with Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to have oversight. Other Levites, all skillful with instruments of music, ¹³ were over the burden bearers and directed all who did work in every kind of service; and some of the Levites were scribes, and officials, and gatekeepers.

¹⁴ While they were bringing out the money that had been brought into the house of the LORD, the priest Hilkiah found the book of the law of the LORD given through Moses. ¹⁵ Hilkiah said to the secretary Shaphan, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD"; and Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan. ¹⁶ Shaphan brought the book to the king, and further reported to the king, "All that was committed to your servants they are doing. ¹⁷ They have emptied out the money that was found in the house of the LORD and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers and the workers." ¹⁸ The secretary Shaphan informed the king, "The priest Hilkiah has given me a book." Shaphan then read it aloud to the king.

¹⁹ When the king heard the words of the law he tore his clothes. ²⁰ Then the king commanded Hilkiah, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Abdon son of Micah, the secretary Shaphan, and the king's servant Asaiah: ²¹ "Go, inquire of the LORD for me and for those who are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that has been found; for the wrath of the LORD that is poured out on us is great, because our ancestors did not keep the word of the LORD, to act in accordance with all that is written in this book."

The Prophet Huldah Consulted

²² So Hilkiah and those whom the king had sent went to the prophet Huldah, the wife of Shallum son of Tokhath son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe (who lived in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter) and spoke to her to that effect. ²³ She declared to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Tell the man who sent you to me, ²⁴ Thus says the LORD: I will indeed bring disaster upon this place and upon its inhabitants, all the curses that are written in the book that was read before the king of Judah. ²⁵ Because they have forsaken me and have made offerings to other gods, so that

they have provoked me to anger with all the works of their hands, my wrath will be poured out on this place and will not be quenched. ²⁶ But as to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus shall you say to him: Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Regarding the words that you have heard, ²⁷ because your heart was penitent and you humbled yourself before God when you heard his words against this place and its inhabitants, and you have humbled yourself before me, and have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, says the LORD. ²⁸ I will gather you to your ancestors and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; your eyes shall not see all the disaster that I will bring on this place and its inhabitants.” They took the message back to the king.

The Covenant Renewed

²⁹ Then the king sent word and gathered together all the elders of Judah and

Jerusalem. ³⁰ The king went up to the house of the LORD, with all the people of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests and the Levites, all the people both great and small; he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD. ³¹ The king stood in his place and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD, keeping his commandments, his decrees, and his statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant that were written in this book. ³² Then he made all who were present in Jerusalem and in Benjamin pledge themselves to it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem acted according to the covenant of God, the God of their ancestors. ³³ Josiah took away all the abominations from all the territory that belonged to the people of Israel, and made all who were in Israel worship the LORD their God. All his days they did not turn away from following the LORD the God of their ancestors.

Celebration of the Passover

35 Josiah kept a passover to the LORD in Jerusalem; they slaughtered the passover lamb on the fourteenth day of the first month. ² He appointed the priests to their offices and encouraged them in the service of the house of the LORD. ³ He said to the Levites who taught all Israel and who were holy to the LORD, “Put the holy ark in the house that Solomon son of David, king of Israel, built; you need no longer carry it on your shoulders. Now serve the LORD your God and his people Israel. ⁴ Make preparations by your ancestral houses by your divisions, following the written directions of King David of Israel and the written directions of his son Solomon. ⁵ Take position in the holy place according to the groupings of the ancestral houses of your kindred the people, and let there be Levites for each division of an ancestral house.^a ⁶ Slaughter the passover lamb, sanctify yourselves, and on behalf of your kindred make preparations, acting according to the word of the LORD by Moses.”

⁷ Then Josiah contributed to the people, as passover offerings for all that were present, lambs and kids from the flock to the number of thirty thousand, and three thousand bulls; these were from the king’s possessions.

⁸ His officials contributed willingly to the people, to the

^a Meaning of Heb uncertain

Read 2 Chronicles 35:1–19

To put his people in contact with the religious traditions Josiah calls for a national celebration of the Passover. The Chronicler's description of this celebration underscores the role of the Levites. In the Chronicler's day, the Levites were cultic ministers who assisted the priests.

Reflect: The shortage of priests in Europe and North America has led to more prominence being given to lay ecclesial ministers. While priests devote themselves to the proclamation of the word and the administration of the sacraments, lay ministers serve the people of God in diverse ways.

Pray: Ask God to inspire many of the Christian faithful for service. The needs are great—especially in ministry to young people and poor people. Offer your prayerful support to lay ministers.

Act: Read the U.S. bishops' document on lay ecclesial ministers: *Co-Workers in the Vineyard of the Lord*.

priests, and to the Levites. Hilkiyah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, the chief officers of the house of God, gave to the priests for the passover offerings two thousand six hundred lambs and kids and three hundred bulls. ⁹ Conaniah also, and his brothers Shemaiah and Nethanel, and Hashabiah and Jeiel and Jozabad, the chiefs of the Levites, gave to the Levites for the passover offerings five thousand lambs and kids and five hundred bulls.

¹⁰ When the service had been prepared for, the priests stood in their place, and the Levites in their divisions according to the king's command. ¹¹ They slaughtered the passover lamb, and the priests dashed the blood that they received^a from them, while the Levites did the skinning. ¹² They set aside the burnt offerings so that they might distribute them according to the groupings of the ancestral houses of the people, to offer to the LORD, as it is written in the book of Moses. And they did the same with the bulls. ¹³ They roasted the passover lamb with fire according to the ordinance; and they boiled the holy offerings in pots, in caldrons, and in pans, and carried them quickly to all the people. ¹⁴ Afterward they made preparations for themselves and for the priests, because the priests the descendants of Aaron were occupied in offering the burnt offerings and the fat parts until night; so the Levites made preparations for themselves and for the priests, the descendants of Aaron. ¹⁵ The singers, the descendants of Asaph, were in their place according to the command of David, and Asaph, and Heman, and the king's seer Jeduthun. The gatekeepers were at each gate; they did not need to interrupt their service, for their kindred the Levites made preparations for them.

¹⁶ So all the service of the LORD was prepared that day, to keep the passover and to offer burnt offerings on the altar of the LORD, according to the command of King Josiah. ¹⁷ The people of Israel who were present kept the passover at that time, and the festival of unleavened bread seven days. ¹⁸ No passover like it had been kept in Israel since the days of the prophet Samuel; none of the kings of Israel had kept such a passover as was kept by Josiah, by the priests and the Levites, by all Judah and Israel who were present, and by the inhabitants of Jerusalem. ¹⁹ In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah this passover was kept.

Defeat by Pharaoh Neco and Death of Josiah

²⁰ After all this, when Josiah had set the temple in order, King Neco of Egypt went up to fight at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah went out against him. ²¹ But Neco^b sent envoys to him, saying, "What have I to do with you, king of Judah? I am not coming

^a Heb lacks *that they received*

^b Heb *he*

Read 2 Chronicles 35:20–27

The tragic death of Josiah shows that there are no guarantees given to those who follow the Lord. Josiah was caught up in the conflicts between rival imperial powers in the ancient Near East and died at the hands of the Egyptians. This tragedy shows that the Bible is not naive about those who lead exemplary lives.

Reflect: A life of virtue does not make a person immune from the power of evil in the world. The ultimate and decisive triumph of Christ over the power of evil has yet to be revealed. We wait for that day with eager expectation.

Pray: Every time we pray the Lord's Prayer, we ask God to hasten the day of Christ's return when sin and death will suffer a final defeat. Pray the words of the Lord's Prayer slowly and meditatively.

Act: Good people whose lives are touched by evil need the loving support of their family and friends. Offer that support by visiting the sick and elderly as part of your parish's outreach.

against you today, but against the house with which I am at war; and God has commanded me to hurry. Cease opposing God, who is with me, so that he will not destroy you." ²² But Josiah would not turn away from him, but disguised himself in order to fight with him. He did not listen to the words of Neco from the mouth of God, but joined battle in the plain of Megiddo. ²³ The archers shot King Josiah; and the king said to his servants, "Take me away, for I am badly wounded." ²⁴ So his servants took him out of the chariot and carried him in his second chariot^a and brought him to Jerusalem. There he died, and was buried in the tombs of his ancestors. All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. ²⁵ Jeremiah also uttered a lament for Josiah, and all the singing men and singing women have spoken of Josiah in their laments to this day. They made these a custom in Israel; they are recorded in the Laments. ²⁶ Now the rest of the acts of Josiah and his faithful deeds in accordance with what is written in the law of the LORD, ²⁷ and his acts, first and last, are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah.

Reign of Jehoahaz

36 The people of the land took Jehoahaz son of Josiah and made him king to succeed his father in Jerusalem. ² Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he began to reign; he reigned three months in Jerusalem. ³ Then the king of Egypt deposed him in Jerusalem and laid on the land a tribute of one hundred talents of silver and one talent of gold. ⁴ The king of Egypt made his brother Eliakim king over Judah and Jerusalem, and changed his name to Jehoiakim; but Neco took his brother Jehoahaz and carried him to Egypt.

Reign and Captivity of Jehoiakim

⁵ Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he began to reign; he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God. ⁶ Against him King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came up, and bound him with fetters to take him to Babylon. ⁷ Nebuchadnezzar also carried some of the vessels of the house of the LORD to Babylon and put them in his palace in Babylon. ⁸ Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and the abominations that he did, and what was found against him, are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah; and his son Jehoiachin succeeded him.

Reign and Captivity of Jehoiachin

⁹ Jehoiachin was eight years old when he began to reign; he reigned three months and ten days in Jeru-

^a Or the chariot of his deputy

Read 2 Chronicles 36:1–21

After the death of Josiah, the kingdom of Judah began a deadly, downward spiral that ended with the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. Judah's last four kings proved to be totally ineffective in preventing this disaster. But the fall of Judah was not only the fault of the country's leadership. The Chronicler makes it clear that the priests and the people were unfaithful and so bore responsibility for the disaster that came upon Jerusalem.

Reflect: The problems in both church and society do not just happen. Of course, the leadership bears its responsibility for the problems that we face. Still, we all need to acknowledge our personal failures.

Pray: Ask for forgiveness that will empower you to become an effective agent for change, helping the church and society to deal with the problems caused by our selfishness and sin.

Act: Use your imagination and creativity to find ways to meet the challenges we face in both our church and our society. Be an agent for positive change.

salem. He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD. ¹⁰ In the spring of the year King Nebuchadnezzar sent and brought him to Babylon, along with the precious vessels of the house of the LORD, and made his brother Zedekiah king over Judah and Jerusalem.

Reign of Zedekiah

¹¹ Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign; he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. ¹² He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God. He did not humble himself before the prophet Jeremiah who spoke from the mouth of the LORD. ¹³ He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God; he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart against turning to the LORD, the God of Israel. ¹⁴ All the leading priests and the people also were exceedingly unfaithful, following all the abominations of the nations; and they polluted the house of the LORD that he had consecrated in Jerusalem.

The Fall of Jerusalem

¹⁵ The LORD, the God of their ancestors, sent persistently to them by his messengers, because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place; ¹⁶ but they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD against his people became so great that there was no remedy.

¹⁷ Therefore he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their youths with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or young woman, the aged or the feeble; he gave them all into his hand. ¹⁸ All the vessels of the house of God, large and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king and of his officials, all these he brought to Babylon. ¹⁹ They burned the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its precious vessels. ²⁰ He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and to his sons until the establishment of the kingdom of Persia, ²¹ to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had made up for its sabbaths. All the days that it lay desolate it kept sabbath, to fulfill seventy years.

Cyrus Proclaims Liberty for the Exiles

²² In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah, the LORD stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom and also

Read 2 Chronicles 36:22–23

Judgment is not the last word in the Chronicler's work. The book ends with the citation of Cyrus's decree that calls for the exiles of Jerusalem to return to their city and rebuild the temple.

Reflect: God's last word to all God's children is forgiveness and restoration. Despite the failures of Judah, which this book lists in painful detail, the Chronicler believed in Judah's future—a future made possible by a loving, merciful, and forgiving God.

Pray: The good news of salvation ought to move us to grateful praise. Our first and last prayer should be to thank God for his goodness to us.

Act: We show that we take God's forgiveness seriously by becoming new persons after having received God's forgiveness. Take stock of your life with God to determine what you need to do in order to become a new person in Jesus Christ.

declared in a written edict: ²³ “Thus says King Cyrus of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him! Let him go up.”