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SATURDAY

Office of Readings

The Lord proclaims his word to Jacob.
—His laws and decrees to Israel.

FIRST READING

From the book of the prophet Isaiah

29:1-8

God's judgment on Jerusalem

Woe to Ariel, Ariel,
the city where David encamped!
Add year to year,
let the feasts come round.
But I will bring distress upon Ariel,
with mourning and grief.
You shall be to me like Ariel,
I will encamp like David against you;
I will encircle you with outposts
and set up siege works against you.
Prostrate you shall speak from the earth,
and from the base dust your words shall come.
Your voice shall be like a ghost's from the earth,
and your words like chirping from the dust.
The horde of your arrogant shall be like fine dust,
the horde of the tyrants like flying chaff.
Then suddenly, in an instant,
you shall be visited by the Lord of hosts,
With thunder, earthquake, and great noise,
whirlwind, storm, and the flame of consuming fire.
Then like a dream,
a vision in the night,
Shall be the horde of all the nations
who war against Ariel
with all the earthworks of her besiegers.

As when a hungry man dreams he is eating
 and awakens with an empty stomach,
 Or when a thirsty man dreams he is drinking
 and awakens faint and dry,
 So shall the horde of all the nations be,
 who make war against Zion.

RESPONSORY

Isaiah 54:4; 29:5, 6, 7

Jerusalem, fear not; you shall not be put to shame;
 —for the Lord of hosts will come to visit you.

The passing multitudes of all nations, which have
 struggled against you,
 will be like flying dust.

—For the Lord . . .

SECOND READING

From a sermon by Blessed Isaac of Stella, abbot

(*Sermo* 51: PL 194, 1862-1863, 1865)

Mary and the Church

The Son of God is the firstborn of many brothers. Although by nature he is the only-begotten, by grace he has joined many to himself and made them one with him. For to those who receive him *he has given the power to become the sons of God.*

He became the Son of man and made many men sons of God, uniting them to himself by his love and power, so that they became as one. In themselves they are many by reason of their human descent, but in him they are one by divine rebirth.

The whole Christ and the unique Christ—the body and the head—are one: one because born of the same God in heaven, and of the same mother on earth. They are many sons, yet one son. Head and members are one

son, yet many sons; in the same way, Mary and the Church are one mother, yet more than one mother; one virgin, yet more than one virgin.

Both are mothers, both are virgins. Each conceives of the same Spirit, without concupiscence. Each gives birth to a child of God the Father, without sin. Without any sin, Mary gave birth to Christ the head for the sake of his body. By the forgiveness of every sin, the Church gave birth to the body, for the sake of its head. Each is Christ's mother, but neither gives birth to the whole Christ without the cooperation of the other.

In the inspired Scriptures, what is said in a universal sense of the virgin mother, the Church, is understood in an individual sense of the Virgin Mary, and what is said in a particular sense of the virgin mother Mary is rightly understood in a general sense of the virgin mother, the Church. When either is spoken of, the meaning can be understood of both, almost without qualification.

In a way, every Christian is also believed to be a bride of God's Word, a mother of Christ, his daughter and sister, at once virginal and fruitful. These words are used in a universal sense of the Church, in a special sense of Mary, in a particular sense of the individual Christian. They are used by God's Wisdom in person, the Word of the Father.

This is why Scripture says: *I will dwell in the inheritance of the Lord.* The Lord's inheritance is, in a general sense, the Church; in a special sense, Mary; in an individual sense, the Christian. Christ dwelt for nine months in the tabernacle of Mary's womb. He dwells until the end of the ages in the tabernacle of the Church's faith. He will dwell for ever in the knowledge and love of each faithful soul.