

Tridentine Rite Parish

The week of 4th-11th February 2007

To give honor and glory
to God and to sanctify and edify the souls of
the faithful by preserving,
protecting, fostering, and defending the
Traditional Latin Mass and
sacraments as contained in the
Missale Romanum of 1962...



"The Mystery of Septuagesima" from Dom Gueranger's "The Liturgical Year"

The season upon which we are now entering is expressive of several profound mysteries. But these mysteries belong not only to the three weeks which are preparatory to Lent: they continue throughout the whole period of time which separates us from the great feast of Easter.

The number *seven* is the basis of all these mysteries. We have already seen how the holy Church came to introduce the season of Septuagesima into her calendar. Let us now meditate on the doctrine hidden under the symbols of her liturgy. And first, let us listen to St. Augustine, who thus gives us the clue to the whole of our season's mysteries. 'There are two times,' says the holy Doctor: 'one which is *now*, and is spent in the temptations and tribulations of this life; the other which shall be *then*, and shall be spent in eternal security and joy. In figure of these, we celebrate two periods: the time before Easter, and the time after Easter. That which is before Easter signifies the sorrow of this present life; that which is after Easter, the blessedness of our future state... Hence it is that we spend the first in fasting and prayer; and in the second we give up our fasting, and give ourselves to praise.'

The Church, the interpreter of the sacred Scriptures, often speaks to us of two places, which correspond with these two times of St. Augustine. These two places are Babylon and Jerusalem. Babylon is the image of this world of sin, in the midst whereof the Christian has to spend his years of probation; Jerusalem is the heavenly country, where he is to repose after all his trials. The people of Israel, whose whole history is but one great type of the human race, was banished from Jerusalem and kept in bondage in Babylon.

Now, this captivity, which kept the Israelites exiles from Sion, lasted seventy years; and it is to express this mystery, as Alcuin, Amalarius, Ivo of Chartres, and all the great liturgists tell us, that the Church fixed the number of seventy for the days of expiation. It is true, there are but sixty-three days between Septuagesima and Easter; but the Church, according to the style so continually used in the sacred Scriptures, uses the round number instead of the literal and precise one.

The duration of the world itself, according to the ancient Christian tradition, is divided into seven ages. The human race must pass through the seven ages before the dawning of the day of eternal life. The first age included the time from the creation of Adam to Noah; the second begins with Noah and the renovation of the earth by the deluge, and ends with this the vocation of Abraham; the third opens with this first formation of God's chosen people, and continues as far as Moses, through whom God gave the Law; the fourth consists of the period between Moses and David, in whom the house of Juda received the kingly power; the fifth is formed of the years which passed between David's reign and the captivity of Babylon, inclusively; the sixth dates from the return of the Jews to Jerusalem, and takes us on as far as the birth of our Saviour. Then, finally, comes the seventh age; it starts with the rising of this merciful Redeemer, the Sun of justice, and is to continue till the dread coming of the Judge of the living and the dead. These are the seven great divisions of time; after which, eternity.