

The Collect of the Day for Ambrose of Milan, O God, you gave your servant Ambrose grace eloquently to proclaim your righteousness in the great congregation, and fearlessly to bear reproach for the honor of your Name: Mercifully grant to all bishops and pastors such excellence in preaching and faithfulness in ministering your Word, that your people may be partakers with them of the glory that shall be revealed; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Psalm 27:5–11 *Read responsively by the half-verse, breaking at the asterisk.*

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5 One thing have I asked of the LORD; one thing I seek; *

that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life;

6 To behold the fair beauty of the LORD * **and to seek him in his temple.**

7 For in the day of trouble he shall keep me safe in his shelter; *

he shall hide me in the secrecy of his dwelling and set me high upon a rock.

8 Even now he lifts up my head * **above my enemies round about me.**

9 Therefore I will offer in his dwelling an oblation with sounds of great gladness; *

I will sing and make music to the LORD.

10 Harken to my voice, O LORD, when I call; * **have mercy on me and answer me.**

11 You speak in my heart and say, "Seek my face." * **Your face, LORD, will I seek.**

First Reading: A Reading from the First Book of the Kings (21:17–29)

The word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying: Go down to meet King Ahab of Israel, who rules in Samaria; he is now in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone to take possession. You shall say to him, "Thus says the LORD: Have you killed, and also taken possession?" You shall say to him, "Thus says the LORD: In the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, dogs will also lick up your blood." Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" He answered, "I have found you. Because you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the LORD, I will bring disaster on you; I will consume you, and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel; and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha son of Ahijah, because you have provoked me to anger and have caused Israel to sin. Also concerning Jezebel the LORD said, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel within the bounds of Jezreel.' Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city the dogs shall eat; and anyone of his who dies in the open country the birds of the air shall eat." (Indeed, there was no one like Ahab, who sold himself to do what was evil in the sight of the LORD, urged on by his wife Jezebel. He acted most abominably in going after idols, as the Amorites had done, whom the LORD drove out before the Israelites.) When Ahab heard those words, he tore his clothes and put sackcloth over his bare flesh; he fasted, lay in the sackcloth, and went about dejectedly. Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite: "Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the disaster in his days; but in his son's days I will bring the disaster on his house."

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Second Reading: A Reading from Luke (12:35–46)

Jesus said to his disciples, "Be dressed for action and have your lamps lit; be like those who are waiting for their master to return from the wedding banquet, so that they may open the door for him as soon as he comes and knocks. Blessed are those slaves whom the master finds alert when he comes; truly I tell you, he will fasten his belt and have them sit down to eat, and he will come and serve them. If he comes during the middle of the night, or near dawn, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. "But know this: if the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour." Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for everyone?" And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and prudent manager whom his master will put in charge of his slaves, to give them their allowance of food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master will find at work when he arrives. Truly I tell you, he will put that one in charge of all his possessions. But if that slave says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and if he begins to beat the other slaves, men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk, the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour that he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and put him with the unfaithful."

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Ambrose of Milan, Bishop and Theologian, 397 (Dec 7) Ambrose was the son of a Roman governor in Gaul, and in 373, he himself became governor in Upper Italy. Though brought up in a Christian family, Ambrose had not been baptized. He became involved in the election of a Bishop of Milan only as mediator between the battling factions of Arians and Nicene Christians. The election was important, because the victorious party would control the powerful see of Milan. Ambrose exhorted

the nearly riotous mob to keep the peace and to obey the law. Suddenly both sides raised the cry, "Ambrose shall be our bishop!" He protested, but the people persisted. Hastily baptized, he was ordained as a bishop on December 7, 373. Ambrose rapidly won renown as a defender of orthodoxy against Arianism and as a statesman of the church. He was also a skillful hymnodist. He introduced antiphonal chanting to enrich the liturgy and wrote straightforward, practical discourses to educate his people in such matters of doctrine as Baptism, the Trinity, the Eucharist, and the Person of Christ. His persuasive preaching was an important factor in the conversion of Augustine of Hippo. Ambrose did not fear to rebuke emperors, including the hot-headed Theodosius, whom he forced to do public penance for the slaughter of several thousand citizens of Thessalonica. He also preached passionate sermons in defense of the poor and the needy. In a homily on Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21) he declares: "The story of Naboth is an old one, but it is repeated every day. Who among the rich does not daily covet the goods of others? Who among the wealthy does not make every effort to drive the poor person out from his little plot and turn the needy out from the boundaries of his ancestral fields? Who is satisfied with what is his? What rich person's thoughts are not preoccupied with his neighbor's possessions? It is not one Ahab who was born, therefore, but—what is worse—Ahab is born every day, and never does he die as far as this world is concerned. For each one who dies there are many others who rise up; there are more who steal property than who lose it ... How far, O rich, will you extend your mad greed?" A meditation attributed to him includes these words: "Lord Jesus Christ, you are for me medicine when I am sick; you are my strength when I need help; you are life itself when I fear death; you are the way when I long for heaven; you are light when all is dark; you are my food when I need nourishment." Among hymns attributed to Ambrose are "The eternal gifts of Christ the King" (The Hymnal 1982, #233; #234), "O Splendor of God's glory bright" (#5), and a series of hymns for the daily office.