

First Readings

(1.) A reading from the book of Exodus

The Lord says this:

‘I myself will send an angel before you to guard you as you go and bring you to the place that I have prepared. Give him reverence and listen to all that he says. Offer him no defiance; he would not pardon such a fault, for My name is in him. If you listen carefully to his voice and do all that I say, I shall be enemy to your enemies, foe to your foes. My angel will go before you.’

The Word of the Lord.

(2.) A reading from the second book of Maccabees

Judas, the leader of the Jews, took a collection from the people individually, amounting to nearly two thousand drachmae, and sent it to Jerusalem to have a sacrifice for sin offered, an altogether fine and noble action, in which he took full account of the resurrection. For if he had not expected the fallen to rise again it would have been superfluous and foolish to pray for the dead, whereas if he had in view the splendid recompense reserved for those who make a pious end, the thought was holy and devout. This was why he had this atonement sacrifice offered for the dead, so that they might be released from their sin.

The Word of the Lord.

(3.) A reading from the book of Job

Job said,

‘Ah, would that these words of mine were written down,
inscribed on some monument with iron chisel and engraving tool,
cut into the rock for ever. This I know: that my Avenger lives,
and he, the Last, will take his stand on earth. After my awaking, he
will set me close to him, and from my flesh I shall look on God.
He whom I shall see will take my part: these eyes will gaze on him
and find him not aloof’

The Word of the Lord.

(4.) A reading from the book of Wisdom

The souls of the virtuous are in the hands of God,
no torment shall ever touch them.

In the eyes of the unwise, they did appear to die,
their going looked like a disaster,
their leaving us, like annihilation;
but they are in peace.

If they experienced punishment as men see it,
their hope was rich with immortality;
slight was their affliction, great will their blessings be.

God has put them to the test
and proved them worthy to be with Him;
He has tested them like gold in a furnace,
and accepted them as a holocaust.

When the time comes for His visitation they will shine out;
as sparks run through the stubble, so will they.

They shall judge nations, rule over peoples,
and the Lord will be their King forever.

They who trust in Him will understand the truth,
those who are faithful will live with Him in love;
for grace and mercy await those He has chosen.

The Word of the Lord.

(5.) A reading from the book of Wisdom

The virtuous man, though he die before his time, will find rest.
Length of days is not what makes age honourable,
nor number of years, the true measure of life;
understanding, this is man's grey hairs,
untarnished life, this is ripe old age.
He has sought to please God, so God has loved him;
as he was living among sinners, he has been taken up.
Coming to perfection in so short a while, he achieved long life;
his soul being pleasing to the Lord,
he has taken him quickly from the wickedness around him.
Yet people look on, uncomprehending;
it does not enter their heads
that grace and mercy await the chosen of the Lord,
and protection, His holy ones.

The Word of the Lord.

(6.) A reading from the Prophet Isaiah

On this mountain,
the Lord of hosts will prepare for all peoples
a banquet of rich food.
On this mountain He will remove
the mourning veil covering all peoples,
and the shroud enwrapping all nations,
He will destroy Death forever.
The Lord will wipe away
the tears from every cheek;
He will take away His people's shame
everywhere on Earth,
for the Lord has said so.
That day, it will be said: See, this is our God
in whom we hoped for salvation;
the Lord is the one in whom we hoped.
We exult and we rejoice
that He has saved us.

The Word of the Lord

(7.) A reading from the book of Lamentations

My soul is shut out from peace;
I have forgotten happiness.
And now I say, 'My strength is gone,
that hope which came from the Lord'.
Brooding on my anguish and affliction
is gall and wormwood.
My spirit ponders continually and sinks within me.
This is what I shall tell my heart,
and so recover hope: the favours of the Lord are not all past,
His kindnesses are not exhausted;
every morning they are renewed;
great is His faithfulness.
'My portion is the Lord' say my soul
'and so I will hope in Him.'
The Lord is good to those who trust Him,
to the soul that searches for Him.
It is good to wait in silence
for the Lord to save.

The Word of the Lord.

(8.) A reading from the Prophet Daniel

I, Daniel, was doing penance when I received this message from the Lord:

'At that time Michael will stand up, the great prince who mounts guard over your people. There is going to be a time of great distress, unparalleled since nations first came into existence. When that time comes, your own people will be spared, all those whose names are found written in the Book. Of those who lie sleeping in the dust of the earth many will awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting disgrace. The learned will shine brightly as the vault of heaven, and those who have instructed many in virtue, as bright as stars for all eternity.'

The Word of the Lord

During Eastertide the First Reading is chosen from Acts or Apocalypse.

(9.) A reading from the Acts of the Apostles

Peter addressed Cornelius and his household:

‘The truth I have now come to realise,’ he said, ‘is that God does not have favourites, but that anybody of any nationality who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to him.

‘It is true, God sent His word to the people of Israel, and it was to them that the good news of peace was brought by Jesus Christ – but Jesus Christ is Lord of all men. You must have heard about the recent happenings in Judaea; about Jesus of Nazareth and how He began in Galilee, after John had been preaching baptism. God has anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and because God was with him, Jesus went about doing good and curing all who had fallen into power of the devil. Now I, and those with me, can witness to everything He did throughout the countryside of Judaea and in Jerusalem itself: and also to the fact that they killed Him by hanging Him on a tree, yet three days afterwards God raised Him to life and allowed Him to be seen, not by the whole people but only by certain witnesses God had chosen beforehand. Now we are those witnesses – we have eaten and drunk with Him after His resurrection from the dead – and He has ordered us to proclaim this to His people and to tell them that God has appointed Him to judge everyone alive or dead. It is to Him that all the prophets bear this witness: that all who believe in Jesus will have their sins forgiven through His name.’

The word of the Lord.

(10.) A reading from the book of the Apocalypse

I, John, heard a voice from heaven say to me, 'Write down: Happy are those who die in the Lord! Happy indeed, the Spirit says; now they can rest for ever after their work, since their good deeds go with them.'

The word of the Lord.

(11.) A reading from the book of the Apocalypse

I, John, saw a great white throne and the One who was sitting on it. In His presence, earth and sky vanished, leaving no trace. I saw the dead, both great and small, standing in front of His throne, while the book of life was opened, and other books which were the record of what they had done in their lives, by which the dead were judged.

The sea gave up all the dead who were in it; Death and Hades were emptied of all the dead that were in them; and everyone was judged according to the way in which he had lived. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the burning lake. This burning lake is the second death; and anybody whose name could not be found written in the book of life was thrown into the burning lake.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; the first heaven and the first earth had disappeared now, and there was no longer any sea.

The Word of the Lord.

(12.) A reading from the book of the Apocalypse

I, John, saw a new heaven and a new earth; the first heaven and the first earth had disappeared now, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the holy city, and the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, as beautiful as a bride all dressed for her husband. Then I heard a loud voice call from the throne, 'You see this city? Here God lives among men. He will make His home among them; they shall be His people, and He will be their God; His name is God-with-them. He will wipe away all tears from their eyes; there will be no more death, and no more mourning or sadness. The world of the past has gone.

Then the One sitting on the throne spoke: 'Now I am making the whole of creation new,' He said. 'I will give water from the well of life free to anybody who is thirsty; it is the rightful inheritance of the one who proves victorious; and I will be His God and He a Son to me.'

The Word of the Lord.

*Second
Readings*

(1.) A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

Hope is not deceptive, because the love of God has been poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit which has been given us. We were still helpless when at His appointed moment Christ died for sinful men. It is not easy to die even for a good man – though of course for someone really worthy, a man might be prepared to die – but what proves that God loves us is that Christ died for us while we were still sinners. Having died to make us righteous is it likely that He would now fail to save us from God's anger? When we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, we were still enemies; now that we have been reconciled, surely we may count on being saved by the life of His Son? Not merely because we have been reconciled but because we are filled with joyful trust in God, through Our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have already gained our reconciliation.

The Word of the Lord.

(2.) A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

If it certain that death reigned over everyone as the consequence of one man's fall, it is even more certain that one man, Jesus Christ, will cause everyone to reign in life who receives the free gift that he does not deserve, of being made righteous. Again, as one man's fall bought condemnation on everyone, so the good act of one man brings everyone life and makes them justified. As by one man's obedience many will be made righteous. When law came, it was to multiply the opportunities of falling, but however great the number of sins committed, grace was even greater; and so, just as sin reigned wherever there was death, so grace will reign to bring eternal life thanks to the righteousness that comes from Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Word of the Lord.

(3.) A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

When we were baptised in Christ Jesus we were baptised in His death; in other words, when we were baptised we went into the tomb with Him and joined Him in death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glory, we too might live a new life.

If in union with Christ we have imitated His death, we shall also imitate Him in His resurrection. We must realise that our former selves have been crucified with Him to destroy this sinful body and to free us from the slavery of sin. When a man dies, of course, he has finished with sin.

But we believe that having died with Christ we shall return to life with him; Christ, as we know, having been raised from the dead will never die again. Death has no power over Him any more.
The Word of the Lord.

(4.) A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

Everyone moved by the Spirit is a son of God. The spirit you received is not the spirit of slaves bringing fear into your lives again; it is the spirit of sons, and it makes us cry out, 'Abba, Father!' The Spirit Himself and our spirit bear united witness that we are children of God. And if we are children we are heirs as well; heirs of God and coheirs with Christ, sharing His suffering so as to share His glory.

I think that what we suffer in this life can never be compared to the glory, as yet unrevealed, which is waiting for us. The whole creation is eagerly waiting for God to reveal His sons. It was not for any fault on the part of creation that it was made unable to attain its purpose, it was made so by God; but creation still retains the hope of being freed, like us, from its slavery to decadence, to enjoy the same freedom and glory as the children of God. From the beginning till now the entire creation, as we know, has been groaning in one great act of giving birth; and not only creation, but all of us who possess the first-fruits of the spirit, we too groan inwardly as we wait for our bodies to be set free.

The Word of the Lord

(5.) A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

With God on our side who can be against us? Since God did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up to benefit us all, we may be certain, after such a gift, that He will not refuse anything He can give. Could anyone accuse those that God has chosen? When God acquits, could anyone condemn? Could Christ Jesus? No! He not only died for us - He rose from the dead, and there at God's right hand He stands and pleads for us.

Nothing therefore can come between us and the love of Christ, even if we are troubled or worried, or being persecuted, or lacking food or clothes, or being threatened or attacked. These are the trials through which we triumph, by the power of Him who loved us.

For I am certain of this: neither death nor life, no angel, no prince, nothing that exists, nothing still to come, not any power, or height or depth, nor any created thing, can ever come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Word of the Lord.

(6.) A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Romans

The life and death of each of us has its influence on others; if we live we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord, so that alive or dead we belong to the Lord. This explains why Christ both died and came to life, it was so that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living. We shall all have to stand before the judgement seat of God; as Scripture says: By my life – it is the Lord who speaks – every knee shall bend before Me, and every tongue shall praise God. It is to God, therefore that each of us must give account of himself.

The Word of the Lord.

(7.) A reading from the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of all who have fallen asleep. Death came through one man and in the same way the resurrection of the dead has come through one man. Just as all men die in Adam, so all men will be brought to life in Christ; but all of them in their proper order; Christ as the first-fruits and then, after the coming of Christ, those who belong to Him. After that will come the end, when He hands over the Kingdom to God the Father. For He must be King until He has put all His enemies under His feet and last of the enemies to be destroyed is death, for everything is to be put under His feet. – Though when it is said that everything is subjected, this clearly cannot include the One who subjected everything to him. And when everything is subjected to him, then the Son himself will be subject in his turn to the One who subjected all things to him, so that God may be all in all.

The Word of the Lord.

(8.) A reading from the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

I will tell you something that been secret; that we are not all going to die, but we shall all be changed. This will be instantaneous, in the twinkling of an eye, when the last trumpet sounds. It will sound, and the dead will be raised, imperishable, and we shall be changed as well, because our present perishable nature must put on imperishability and this mortal nature must put on immortality.

When this perishable nature has put on imperishability, and when this mortal nature has put on immortality, then the words of scripture will come true: Death is swallowed up in victory. Death, where is your victory? Death where is your sting? Now the sting of death is sin, and sin gets its power from the Law. So let us thank God for giving us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Word of the Lord.

(9.) A reading from the Second Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

We know that He who raised the Lord Jesus to life will raise us with Jesus in our turn, and put us by His side and you with us. You see, all this is for your benefit, so that the more grace is multiplied among people, the more thanksgiving there will be, to the glory of God.

That is why there is no weakening on our part, and instead, though this outer man of ours may be falling into decay, the inner man is renewed day by day. Yes, the troubles which are soon over, though they weigh little, train us for the carrying of a weight of eternal glory which is out of all proportion to them. And so we have no eyes for things that are visible, but only for things which are invisible; for visible things last only for a time, and the invisible things are eternal.

For we know that when the tent that we live in on earth is folded up, there is a house built by God for us, an everlasting home not made by human hands, in the heavens.

The Word of the Lord.

(10.) A reading from the Second Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

We know that when the tent that we live in on earth is folded up, there is a house built by God for us, an everlasting home not made by human hands, in the heavens.

We are always full of confidence, then, when we remember that to live in the body means to be exiled from the Lord, going as we do by faith and not by sight – we are full of confidence, I say, and actually want to be exiled from the body and make our home with the Lord. Whether we are living in the body or exiled from it, we are intent on pleasing him. For all the truth about us will be brought out in the law court of Christ, and each of us will get what he deserves for the things he did in the body, good or bad.

The Word of the Lord.

(11.) A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul to the Philippians

For us, our homeland is in heaven, and from heaven comes the Saviour we are waiting for, the Lord Jesus Christ, and He will transfigure these wretched bodies of ours into copies of His own glorious body. He will do that by the same power with which He can subdue the whole universe.

The Word of the Lord.

(12.) A reading from the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Thessalonians

We want you to be quite certain, brothers, about those who have died, to make sure that you do not grieve about them, like the other people who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again, and that it will be the same for those who have died in Jesus; God will bring them with Him. We can tell you this from the Lord's own teaching, that any of us who are left alive at the Lord's coming will not have any advantage over those who have died. At the trumpet of God, the voice of the Archangel will call out the command and the Lord Himself will come down from heaven; those who have died in Christ will be the first to rise, and then those of us who are still alive will be taken up into the clouds, together with them, to meet the Lord in the air. So we shall stay with the Lord forever. With such thoughts as these you should comfort one another.

The Word of the Lord