

Options for the First Reading

FIRST READING | *Job 19:1,23-27*

Reader: 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 Redeemer 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 my not aloof.”

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

FIRST READING | *Wisdom 3:1-9*

Reader: 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 for ever.

They who trust in him will understand the truth,
those who are faithful will live with him in love;
for grace and mercy away those he has chosen.

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

FIRST READING | *Wisdom 4:7-15*

Reader: 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.
He has been carried off so that evil may not warp his
understanding
or treachery seduce his soul;
for the fascination of evil throws good things into the shade,
and the whirlwind of desire corrupts a simple heart.
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.

All: Thanks be to God.

FIRST READING | *Isaiah 25:6-9*

Reader: A reading from the prophet Isaiah.

On this mountain, the Lord of Hosts will prepare for all peoples a banquet of rich food, a banquet of fine wines, of food rich and juicy, of fine strained wines. On this mountain he will remove the mourning veil covering all peoples, and the shroud enwrapping all nations, he will destroy death for ever. 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.

All: Thanks be to God.

FIRST READING | *Lamentations 3:17-26*

Reader: 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 it 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,’ says 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.

All: Thanks be to God.

FIRST READING | *Daniel 12:1-3*

Reader: A reading from the book of the prophet Daniel.

I, Daniel, mourned and I heard the word of 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 as 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

All: Thanks be to God.

FIRST READING | *2 Maccabees 12:43-46*

Reader: A reading from the second book of Maccabees.

Judas, the ruler of Israel, took a collection amongst his soldiers, amounting to nearly two thousand drachmas, 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 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.

All: Thanks be to God.

FIRST READING | *Proverbs 31:10-25*

Reader: A reading from the book of Proverbs.

A perfect wife – who can find her? She is far beyond the price of pearls. Her husband's heart has confidence in her, from her he will derive no little profit. Advantage and not hurt she brings him all the days of her life. She is always busy with wool and with flax, she does her work with eager hands. She is like a merchant vessel bringing her food from far away. She gets up while it is still dark giving her household their food, giving orders to her serving girls. She sets her mind on a field, then she buys it; with what her hands have earned she plants a vineyard. She puts her back into her work and shows how strong her arms can be. She finds her labour well worthwhile; her lamp does not go out at night. She sets her hands to the distaff, her fingers grasp the spindle. She holds out her hand to the poor, she opens her arms to the needy. Snow may come, she has no fears for her household, with all her servants warmly clothed. She makes her own quilts, she is dressed in fine linen and purple. Her husband is respected at the city gates, taking his seat among the elders of the land. She is clothed in strength and dignity, she can laugh at the days to come.

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.