

Readings: Martyrs from Vietnam - Optional Memorial

First Reading Introduction

At a time when the first persecutions of the Church had begun, the Book of Revelation speaks of the killing by evil forces of those who witness with their lives. But like the dried-up bones in Ezekiel, the martyrs will be raised to life and go to heaven.

First Reading: Revelation 11:4-12

I, John, heard a voice from heaven speak to me:

Here are my two witnesses:

These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands
that stand before the Lord of the earth.

If anyone wants to harm them, fire comes out of their mouths
and devours their enemies.

In this way, anyone wanting to harm them is sure to be slain.

They have the power to close up the sky
so that no rain can fall during the time of their prophesying.

They also have power to turn water into blood
and to afflict the earth with any plague as often as they wish.

When they have finished their testimony,
the beast that comes up from the abyss

will wage war against them and conquer them and kill them.

Their corpses will lie in the main street of the great city,
which has the symbolic names "Sodom" and "Egypt,"

where indeed their Lord was crucified.

Those from every people, tribe, tongue, and nation
will gaze on their corpses for three and a half days,

and they will not allow their corpses to be buried.

The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them
and be glad and exchange gifts

because these two prophets tormented the inhabitants of the earth.

But after the three and a half days,
a breath of life from God entered them.

When they stood on their feet, great fear fell on those who saw them.

Then they heard a loud voice from heaven say to them, "Come up here."

So they went up to heaven in a cloud as their enemies looked on.

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 144:1, 2, 9-10

R/ Blessed be the Lord, my Rock!

Blessed be the Lord, my rock,
who trains my hands for battle, my fingers for war.
R/ Blessed be the Lord, my Rock!

My mercy and my fortress,
my stronghold, my deliverer,
My shield, in whom I trust,
who subdues my people under me.
R/ Blessed be the Lord, my Rock!

O God, I will sing a new song to you;
with a ten-stringed lyre I will chant your praise.
You who give victory to kings,
and deliver David, your servant from the evil sword.

R/ Blessed be the Lord, my Rock!

Gospel Introduction

"God is the God of the living," says Jesus. He calls back to life those who die; death is overcome, since Jesus rose from the dead. The witnesses of the first reading are put to death by the mighty of this earth because they contest the abuse of power, but God raises them up. The resurrection is the core of our faith, not only as a promise to live on in God's joy after death, but already now as a power of building up one another in human dignity, justice, peace and serving love. We cannot die for ever, because God cannot stop loving us.

Some Sadducees arrived. These people claim that there is no resurrection and they asked Jesus this question, "Master, in the Scripture Moses told us: 'If anyone dies leaving a wife but no children, his brother must take the wife, and the child to be born will be regarded as the child of the deceased man.' Now, there were seven brothers; the first married a wife, but he died without children; and the second and the third took the wife; in fact all seven died leaving no children. Last of all the woman died. On the day of the resurrection, to which of them will the woman be wife? For the seven had her as wife."

And Jesus replied, "Taking husband or wife is proper to people of this world, but for those who are considered worthy of the world to come and of resurrection from the dead, there is no more marriage. Besides, they cannot die for they are like the angels. They too are sons and daughters of God because they are born of the resurrection.
"Yes, the dead will be raised, and even Moses implied it in the passage about the burning bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. For he is God of the living and not of the dead, and for him all are alive."

Some teachers of the Law then agreed with Jesus, "Master, you have spoken well."
