

Holy Innocents Church Funeral Ministry

Selections for the First Reading – Old Testament

1. A Reading from the Book of Job (19:23-27)

Job answered and said: Oh, would that my words were written down! Would that they were inscribed in a record – that with an iron chisel and with lead they were cut in the rock forever! But as for me, I know that my Vindicator lives, and that He will at last stand forth upon the dust; Whom I myself shall see – my own eyes, not another's, shall behold Him. And from my flesh I shall see God; my inmost being is consumed with longing.

2. A Reading from the Book of Wisdom (3:1-5, 9)

The souls of the just are in the hand of God, and no torment shall touch them. They seemed in the view of the foolish to be dead; and their passing away was thought an affliction, and their going forth from us, utter destruction. But they are in peace. For if before men, indeed, they be punished, yet is their hope full of immortality. Chastised a little, they shall be greatly blessed, because God tried them and found them worthy of himself. Those who trust in Him shall understand truth, and the faithful shall abide with Him in love: Because grace and mercy are with His holy ones, and His care is with His elect.

3. A Reading from the Book of Wisdom (4:7-15)

The just man, though he dies early, shall be at rest. For the age that is honorable comes not with the passing of time, nor can it be measured in terms of years. Rather, understanding is the hoary crown for men, and an unsullied life, the attainment of old age. He who pleased God was loved; he who lived among sinners was transported – snatched away, lest wickedness perverts his mind or deceit beguiles his soul: for the witchery of paltry things obscures what his right and the whirl of desire transforms the innocent mind. Having become perfect in a short while, he reached the fullness of a long career; for his soul was pleasing to the Lord therefore He sped him out of the midst of wickedness. But the people saw and did not understand, nor did they take this into account.

4. A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah (25:6a, 7-9)

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will provide for all peoples. On this mountain He will destroy the veil that veils all peoples. The web that is woven over all nations; He will destroy death forever. The Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces; the reproach of His people He will remove from the whole earth; for the Lord has spoken. On that day it will be said: "Behold our God, to whom we looked to save us! This is the Lord for whom we looked; let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us!"

5. A Reading from the Second Book of Maccabees (12:43-46)

Judas, the ruler of Israel, took up a collection among all his soldiers, amounting to two thousand silver drachmas, which he sent to Jerusalem to provide for an expiatory sacrifice. In doing this he acted in a very excellent and noble way; inasmuch as he had the resurrection of the dead in view; for if he were not expecting the fallen to rise again, it would have been useless and foolish to pray for them in death. But if he did this with a view to the splendid reward that awaits those who have gone to rest in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Thus he made atonement for the dead that they might be freed from sin.

6. A Reading from Ecclesiastes (3:1-12)

There is a given time for everything, a time for everything happening under heaven: a time for giving birth; a time for dying; a time for planting; a time for uprooting what has been planted; a time for killing; a time for healing; a time for knocking down; a time for building; a time for tears; a time for laughter; a time for mourning; a time for dancing; a time for throwing stones away; a time for gathering them; a time for embracing; a time to refrain from embracing; a time for searching; a time for losing; a time for keeping; a time for discarding; a time for keeping silent; a time for speaking; a time for loving; a time for hating; a time for war; a time for peace...What do people gain from the efforts they make? I considered the task God gave to the sons of men. He made everything fitting in its time but He also set eternity in their hearts, although man is not able to embrace the work of God from the beginning to the end.

7. A Reading from the Book of Proverbs (31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31)

When one finds a worthy wife, her value is far beyond pearls. Her husband, entrusting his heart to her, has an unfailing prize. She brings him good, and not evil, all the days of her life. She obtains wool and flax and works with loving hands. She put her hands to the distaff, and her fingers ply the spindle. She reaches out her hands to the poor, and extends her arms to the needy. Charm is deceptive and beauty fleeting; the woman who fears the Lord is to be praised. Give her a reward for her labors, and let her works praise her at the city gates.

8. A Reading from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah (43:1-7, 49:14-16)

The Lord who created you says: Do not be afraid, I will save you; I have called you by your name and you are mine. When you pass through deep waters, I will be with you and your troubles will not be able to overcome you. Even if you walk through fire, you will not be burned; even though you endure hard trials, they will not be victorious over you. For I am your God, the God who saves you from harm. You are precious to me and I love you, so do not be afraid for I am with you. From the distant West and the farthest East, I will bring you home. I will tell the North to let you go, and the South not to hold you back, for you are my own dear child whom I have created for glory. Before you were even born, I chose you as my own. But perhaps you say: "How can we be sure of the Lord's love?" And so the Lord answers: "Can a mother forget her own baby? Can she refuse to love the child that she bore? Yet even if she should forget, I will not. I have written your name on the palm of my hand and I will bring you home."