

August 3rd

The Holy MACCABEAN MARTYRS

Optional memorial

From the account in the Second Book of Maccabees (7: 1-42). These seven brothers, encouraged by their mother, chose to die rather than betray the Law of Moses, and they were martyred under Antiochus Epiphanes around 163 BC. They were revered by the Jewish people, and also by the first Christians, who saw them as precursors of the martyrs of Christ. From the earliest times, their relics have been venerated at Antioch (Syria). This narrative of the Maccabees is one of the few texts of the Old Testament which explicitly present the day of death as "the day of mercy" for those who love God, the day of "their resurrection to eternal life", a hope which Jesus was to fulfill through his Passion and Resurrection.

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON:                    2 Macc 7: 37

Like my brothers, I offer up my body and my life for our ancestral laws.

COLLECT

As we rejoice in the glory of the Seven Brothers Martyrs, may the sight of the great number of your holy Martyrs gladden us, O Lord, making our faith stronger and bringing us consolation by their prayers.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ...

FIRST READING

A reading from the Second Book of the Maccabees            7: 1-2. 9-14. 20-21. 27b-30. 39-41

It also happened that seven brothers with their mother were arrested and tortured with whips and scourges by the king, to force them to eat pork in violation of God's law. One of the brothers, speaking for the others, said: "What do you expect to achieve by questioning us? We are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our ancestors." At the point of death the second brother said: "You accursed fiend, you are depriving us of this present life, but the King of the world will raise us up to live again forever. It is for his laws that we are dying."

After him the third suffered their cruel sport. He put out his tongue at once when told to do so, and bravely held out his hands, as he spoke these noble words: "It was from Heaven that I received these; for the sake of his laws I disdain them; from him I hope to receive them again." Even the king and his attendants marveled at the young man's courage, because he regarded his sufferings as nothing.

After he had died, they tortured and maltreated the fourth brother in the same way. When he was near death, he said, "It is my choice to die at the hands of men with the God-given hope of being restored to life by him; but for you, there will be no resurrection to life."

Most admirable and worthy of everlasting remembrance was the mother, who saw her seven sons perish in a single day, yet bore it courageously because of her hope in the Lord. Filled with a noble spirit that stirred her womanly heart with manly courage, she exhorted each of them in the language of their forefathers with these words: "Son, have pity on me, who carried you in my womb for nine months, nursed you for three years, brought you up, educated and supported you to your present age. I beg you, child, to look at the heavens and the earth and see all that is in them; then you will know that God did not make them out of existing things; and in the same way the human race came into existence. Do not be afraid of this executioner, but be worthy of your brothers and accept death, so that in the time of mercy I may receive you again with them."

She had scarcely finished speaking when the youth said: "What are you waiting for? I will not obey the king's command. I obey the command of the law given to our forefathers through Moses".

At that, the king became enraged and treated him even worse than the others, since he bitterly resented the boy's contempt. Thus he too died undefiled, putting all his trust in the Lord. The mother was last to die, after her sons.

The Word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Ps 119: 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14 (R. 14a)

R. I delight in the way of your decrees.

1. How shall a youth remain pure on his way?  
By obeying your word.

2. I have sought you with all my heart;  
let me not stray from your commands.

3. I treasure your word in my heart,  
lest I sin against you.

4. Blest are you, O LORD;  
teach me your statutes.

5. With my lips have I recounted  
all the decrees of your mouth.

6. I rejoice in the way of your precepts,  
as though all riches were mine.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Matt 5: 10

R. Alleluia. Alleluia.

Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

R. Alleluia.

GOSPEL

A reading from the holy Gospel according to saint Matthew 20: 17-23

As Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve (disciples) aside by themselves, and said to them on the way, "Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day." Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee approached him with her sons and did him homage, wishing to ask him for something. He said to her, "What do you wish?" She answered him, "Command that these two sons of mine sit, one at your right and the other at your left, in your kingdom."

Jesus said in reply, "You do not know what you are asking. Can you drink the cup that I am going to drink?" They said to him, "We can." He replied, "My cup you will indeed drink, but to sit at my right and at my left (, this) is not mine to give but is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father."

The Gospel of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Grant us, Lord, to celebrate this Eucharist with devotion in honour of your holy Martyrs, so that it may be for us a source of solace and joy.

Through Christ our Lord.

PREFACE

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts...

COMMUNION ANTIPHON                      John 15: 13

No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends, said the Lord.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Almighty God, by sharing in this sacrament, we honour the memory of your Martyrs; grant us to follow in their footsteps as we progress in our faith.

Through Christ our Lord.