

Readings: Feria

First Reading: 2 Mac 6:18-31

Eleazar, one of the foremost scribes,
a man of advanced age and noble appearance,
was being forced to open his mouth to eat pork.
But preferring a glorious death to a life of defilement,
he spat out the meat,
and went forward of his own accord to the instrument of torture,
as people ought to do who have the courage to reject the food
which it is unlawful to taste even for love of life.
Those in charge of that unlawful ritual meal took the man aside privately,
because of their long acquaintance with him,
and urged him to bring meat of his own providing,
such as he could legitimately eat,
and to pretend to be eating some of the meat of the sacrifice
prescribed by the king;
in this way he would escape the death penalty,
and be treated kindly because of their old friendship with him.
But Eleazar made up his mind in a noble manner,
worthy of his years, the dignity of his advanced age,
the merited distinction of his gray hair,
and of the admirable life he had lived from childhood;
and so he declared that above all

he would be loyal to the holy laws given by God.

He told them to send him at once
to the abode of the dead, explaining:
"At our age it would be unbecoming to make such a pretense;
many young people would think the ninety-year-old Eleazar
had gone over to an alien religion.
Should I thus pretend for the sake of a brief moment of life,
they would be led astray by me,
while I would bring shame and dishonor on my old age.
Even if, for the time being, I avoid the punishment of men,
I shall never, whether alive or dead,
escape the hands of the Almighty.
Therefore, by manfully giving up my life now,
I will prove myself worthy of my old age,
and I will leave to the young a noble example
of how to die willingly and generously

for the revered and holy laws."

Eleazar spoke thus,
and went immediately to the instrument of torture.
Those who shortly before had been kindly disposed,
now became hostile toward him because what he had said
seemed to them utter madness.
When he was about to die under the blows,
he groaned and said:
"The Lord in his holy knowledge knows full well that,
although I could have escaped death,
I am not only enduring terrible pain in my body from this scourging,
but also suffering it with joy in my soul
because of my devotion to him."
This is how he died,
leaving in his death a model of courage
and an unforgettable example of virtue

not only for the young but for the whole nation.

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 3:2-3, 4-5, 6-7

R./ The Lord upholds me.

O LORD, how many are my adversaries!
Many rise up against me!
Many are saying of me,
"There is no salvation for him in God."
R./ The Lord upholds me.

But you, O LORD, are my shield;
my glory, you lift up my head!
When I call out to the LORD,
he answers me from his holy mountain.
R./ The Lord upholds me.

When I lie down in sleep,
I wake again, for the LORD sustains me.
I fear not the myriads of people
arrayed against me on every side.

R./ The Lord upholds me.

Gospel Reading: Lk 19:1-10

When Jesus entered Jericho and was going through the city, a man named Zaccheus was there. He was a tax collector and a wealthy man. He wanted to see what Jesus was like, but he was a short man and could not see because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed up a sycamore tree. From there he would be able to see Jesus who had to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zaccheus, come down quickly for I must stay at your house today." So Zaccheus hurried down and received him joyfully.

"All the people who saw it began to grumble and said, "He has gone to the house of a sinner as a guest." But Zaccheus spoke to Jesus, "The half of my goods, Lord, I give to the poor, and if I have cheated anyone, I will pay him back four times as much." Looking at him Jesus said, "Salvation has come to this house today, for he is also a true son of Abraham. The Son of Man has come to seek and to save the lost."
