

THE FAITH TO STAND ALONE: MONDAY, 15 NOVEMBER 2021, WEEK 33, YEAR I.

1 MACCABEES 1:10-15, 41-43, 54-57, 62-64; PSALM 119; LUKE 18:35-43.

From today till Saturday, we shall be reading from the Book of Maccabees. The book was written in about 100BC by an unknown Palestinian Jew. It contains the story of how Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a former slave, emerged as the king in the Seleucid kingdom of the Greeks and tried to suppress the religion of the Jews. This book tells the story of how God delivered Israel through the family of Mattathias, especially through his three sons - Judas, Jonathan and Simon and his grandson John Hyrcanus, in what is called the Maccabean revolt.

Today's First Reading narrates how Antiochus tried to impose the practices of the pagans on the Jews. Many Jews apostatised; they were quick in abandoning their faith and rejecting the covenant. They sacrificed to idols, profaned the sabbath, neglected circumcision, participated in pagan practices and submitted themselves as slaves of impiety.

However, there were some in Israel, a faithful minority, who refused to compromise. They chose death rather than betray God.

Let us learn today from the example of this faithful minority. Our faith and values may sometimes set us apart from the majority and sometimes people may look at us as deluded or as derailed because we do not conform to popular patterns and cultures.

This is the message for us all. To serve God faithfully, we must be courageous enough and willing to stand out, to stand alone, to insist, to resist opinions and values that contradict our Christian conscience. The road to salvation is very narrow and only a few can follow it. The road to perdition is wide, convenient and popular and so, it is the preferred choice of the crowd.

Today's Gospel narrates the story of a blind beggar who refused to be intimidated and suppressed by the crowd, who wanted him to keep quiet. He shouted till he was heard by the Lord and he received his healing. Jesus told him that his faith had saved him. The faith that can withstand opposition without melting or dissolving, the faith that can stand against the crowd, is a faith that saves.

We pray that the Lord will fortify our faith so that it may be strong enough to withstand opposition and the force of resistance and be the faith to stand alone if needs be.