

THE ZEAL OF MATTATHIAS: THURSDAY, 18TH NOVEMBER, 2021, WEEK 33, YEAR I.

1 MACCABEES 2:15-29; PSALM 50; LUKE 19:41-44

For some days now, we have been reading about the heroic examples of some Jews who preferred to die rather than offend God.

On Tuesday, we read about Eleazar. Yesterday, we read about a mother and her seven sons. Today, we are introduced to the main heroes in the book of Maccabees - Mattathias and his sons. They fought hard for the preservation of true religion, the eradication of paganism and the restoration of the desecrated temple in Jerusalem.

In fact, the book of Maccabees is named after one of the sons of Mattathias, named Judas Maccabees.

In today's First Reading, the commissioners of King Antiochus persuaded Mattathias and his sons to come forward and offer sacrifice to idols on the altar in Modein. The commissioners tried to persuade them with two strong fallacious reasonings:

I. All the nations under the earth had done this - appeal to the majority (argumentum ad populum).

II. If they did it, they would be rewarded with wealth and they would become friends of the king - the end justifies the means (argumentum ad consequentiam).

The offers were so tantalising but this family refused them. Mattathias had brought his sons up to be zealous for the Lord. They had learnt that obedience to God was more important than wealth, than friendship with the king or preservation of life. They had learnt that to stay on the side of God was more important than staying on the side of the king, authorities or the majority.

This is a lesson for all of us. Let us be careful of every temptation to disobey God or go against our conscience in order to please anyone, to obtain a temporal benefit or to conform to what everyone else is doing.

In today's Gospel, Jesus wept over Jerusalem because of her coming doom which was the result of rejecting God's offer of peace. It causes so much sadness to the loving heart of Jesus when we succumb to the temptation of pleasing people, when we choose to follow the majority to commit sin, when we compromise our faithfulness in order to obtain a temporal favour.

Lord Jesus, help me to identify temptation to sin and to reject it. Strengthen me to always remain faithful to you in every situation, no matter the cost. May I bring joy not sorrow to your Sacred Heart.