

FIRST READING – ALL SOULS

A reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines,
of rich food filled with marrow,
of well-aged wines strained clear.
And he will destroy on this mountain
the shroud that is cast over all peoples,
the sheet that is spread over all nations;
he will swallow up death forever.
Then the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces,
and the disgrace of his people
he will take away from all the earth,
for the Lord has spoken.
It will be said on that day,
“Lo, this is our God;
we have waited for him, so that he might save us.
This is the Lord for whom we have waited;
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.
For the hand of the Lord will rest on this mountain.”



PAUSE for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING – ALL SOULS

A reading from the letter of Saint Paul to the Romans.

Pause – and look up at the assembly

Brothers and sisters:

All of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus
were baptized into his death.

Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death,
so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead
by the glory of the Father,
so we too might walk in newness of life.

But if we have died with Christ,
we believe that we will also live with him.

We know that Christ, being raised from the dead,
will never die again;
death no longer has dominion over him.



Pause for **THREE** seconds
then look up at the people
and say SLOWLY:

The WORD of the LORD.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL READING – ALL SOULS

The Lord be with you.

And with your spirit.

A reading from the holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

After Jesus had fed the crowd with the five loaves,
he said to the people:
“Everything that the Father gives me will come to me,
and anyone who comes to me I will never drive away;
for I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will,
but the will of him who sent me.
And this is the will of him who sent me,
that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me,
but raise it up on the last day.
This is indeed the will of my Father,
that all who see the Son and believe in him may have eternal life;
and I will raise them up on the last day.”



The GOSPEL of the LORD.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURE IN DEPTH

Reading I: Isaiah 25:6a, 7-9

Here our attention is inevitably focused on Is 25:8, “He will swallow up death for ever,” a verse that is cited in 1 Cor 15:26, 15:44 and alluded to in Rev 7:17 (cf. 21:4).

This passage comes from the Apocalypse of Isaiah (Is 24-27). It announces the coming time when the curse of Gen 3:19 will be canceled forever. At this stage of the Old Testament, this can hardly mean the resurrection of the dead, but only that the covenant people of Israel will not die any more. The New Testament quite legitimately reinterpreted it in the light of Jesus' Easter victory.

Responsorial Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

It is instructive to compare the use of this psalm here with its use on the sixteenth Sunday of the year in series B. There the emphasis is indicated by the refrain, which focuses on the image of the shepherd.

Here, since it is in response to the reading from Isaiah on the messianic banquet, the emphasis lies upon the Lord's house or temple, where he prepares the banquet table and invites his people to share the blessings of his kingdom.

The third stanza marks a shift in imagery from God as shepherd to God as host at his banquet.

Reading II : Romans 6:3-4, 8-9

Our passage explicitly connects Christian burial with Christian baptism. In baptism the believer died and was buried. The Christian life is a life of constant dying to sin and thereby implementing what baptism symbolized. Hence all the words about resurrection in this passage are in conditional or purposive clauses or in future tenses: “that we might walk,” “we shall live,” and so on.

The Christian life is a partial realization of the future resurrection life. This says several things that are relevant at the moment of death. If we believe that

resurrection means only the new life in Christ that we live on this earth after baptism, and see no point in the hope of a life after death, we are ignoring the fact that the Christian life, however good it may be, falls far short of perfect life of resurrection. Our life, even the best of Christian lives, even the lives of the saints, are characterized by a “not yet” that cries out for completion. “Eye has not seen nor ear heard what God has prepared for those who love him.” The strongest ground for believing in a future consummation is this “not-yet-ness” that characterizes our present life in Christ.

Gospel: John 6:37-40

These verses come from the bread discourse of John 6, but except for the echo in the phrase “came down from” and the reiteration of the promise “I will raise him up at the last day,” there is no direct connection with the theme of the bread from heaven. We have here the characteristically Johannine juxtaposition of realized and future eschatology. On the one hand, the believers are already given to the Son and come to him and see him and are not cast out but already have eternal life. On the other hand, they will be raised up at the last day and then will not be cast out but will see the Son and have eternal life. To understand John, we have to hold in tension the “already” and the “not yet,” and not eliminate the tension (as Bultmann did) by attributing the refrain “I will raise him up at the last day” to a later hand. A Christian believer has the assurance that the experience of Christ in this life is not something that will be cast away at death but will be consummated beyond death.

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