

SAINT PETER AND SAINT PAUL (B)

1st Reading (Acts 12, 1-11)

King Herod decided to persecute some members of the Church. He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword, and when he saw how it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This happened during the festival of the Unleavened Bread. Herod had him seized and thrown into prison with four squads, each of four soldiers, to guard him. He wanted to bring him to trial before the people after the Passover feast, but while Peter was kept in prison, the whole Church prayed earnestly for him. On the very night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound by a double chain, while guards kept watch at the gate of the prison. Suddenly an angel of the Lord stood there and a light shone in the prison cell. The angel tapped Peter on the side and woke him saying, "Get up quickly!" At once the chains fell from Peter's wrists. The angel said, "Put on your belt and your sandals." Peter did so, and the angel added, "Now, put on your cloak and follow me." Peter followed him out; yet he did not realize that what was happening with the angel was real; he thought he was seeing a vision. They passed the first guard and then the second and they came to the iron door leading out to the city, which opened of itself for them. They went out and made their way down a narrow alley, when suddenly the angel left him. Then Peter recovered his senses and said, "Now I know that the Lord has sent his angel and has rescued me from Herod's clutches and from all that the Jews had in store for me."

Responsorial Psalm (Ps 34)

I will bless the Lord all my days;
his praise will be ever on my lips.
My soul makes its boast in the Lord;
let the lowly hear and rejoice.

Oh, let us magnify the Lord,
together let us glorify his name!
I sought the Lord, and he answered me;
from all my fears he delivered me.

They who look to him are radiant with joy,
their faces never clouded with shame.
When the poor cry out, the Lord hears
and saves them from distress.

The Lord's angel encamps and patrols
to keep safe those who fear him.
Oh, see and taste the goodness of the Lord!
Blessed is the one who finds shelter in him!

2nd Reading (2Tim 4,6-8.17-18)

As for me the time of sacrifice has arrived, and the moment of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness with which the Lord, the just judge, will reward me on that day; and not only me, but all those who have longed for his glorious coming. But the Lord was at my side, giving me strength to proclaim the Word fully, and let all the pagans hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will save me from all evil, bringing me to his heavenly kingdom. Glory to him for ever and ever. Amen!

Gospel (Mt 26, 13-19)

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi. He asked his disciples, "What do people say of the Son of Man? Who do they say I am?" They said, "For some of them you are John the Baptist, for others Elijah or Jeremiah or one of the prophets." Jesus asked them, "But you, who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "It is well for you, Simon Barjona, for it is not flesh or blood that has revealed this to you but my Father in heaven. And now I say to you: You are Peter (or Rock) and on this rock I will build my Church; and never will the powers of death overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and what you unbind on earth shall be unbound in heaven."