

THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY: VIGIL

LECTIONARY #621

READING I 1 Chronicles 15:3–4, 15–16; 16:1–2

A reading from the first Book of Chronicles

David assembled **all Israel** in **Jerusalem** to bring the **ark**
of the **LORD**

to the **place** that he had **prepared** for it.

David also called together the sons of **Aaron** and the **Levites**.

The **Levites** bore the **ark** of God on their **shoulders** with **poles**,
as **Moses** had **ordained** according to the **word** of the **LORD**.

David commanded the **chiefs** of the **Levites**

to **appoint** their **kinsmen** as **chanters**,

to play on **musical** instruments, **harps**, **lyres**, and **cymbals**,

to make a **loud sound** of **rejoicing**.

They brought in the **ark** of **God** and set it **within** the **tent**
which **David** had **pitched** for it.

Then they offered up **burnt offerings** and **peace offerings** to **God**.

When **David** had finished offering up the **burnt offerings** and
peace offerings,

he **blessed** the people in the **name** of the **LORD**.

Chronicles = KRAH-nih-k*ls

A reading that describes the preparation
and then the activities of a celebration
ordained by King David.

Aaron = AYR-uhn

Levites = LEE-vits

Don't rush through the details. These—
including the musical instruments signify
the nature and quality of the celebration.

Note the parallel emphases on "burnt
offerings" and "peace offerings."

The feast of the Assumption of Mary is both ancient and new. It has been celebrated as part of the Christian tradition since the fifth century, but the Catholic dogma (doctrine) of the assumption of Mary did not become official until 1950 under Pope Pius XII. The readings for the vigil Mass point to the holiness of those objects or people that bear the presence of God; Mary is honored by God for her discipleship and holiness in bearing Christ into the world and so we believe she was taken up, body and soul, into heaven.

READING I

Our first reading is a narrative account of King David bringing the ark of God into Jerusalem. This is the ark that had traveled with the Israelites from the time of the Exodus. It was said to have contained the tablets of the Ten Commandments and to have special powers of protection for the Israelites. Except for the times that their warriors carried it into battle, it was kept in a special tent attended by Israelite priests and Levites, the tribe of Jacob that was set aside for religious service.

When David first rose to power, the ark was housed at Kirjath-jearim, but after he built his palace in Jerusalem, he ordered that the ark be brought to Jerusalem, where it continued to reside in a tent, as it had throughout the Exodus. This reading gives us a glimpse into the honor and splendor associated with the ark of God. The descendants of Aaron, whom David gathered for the transport of the ark, are the priests. The Levites, who carried the ark over its nine-mile journey to Jerusalem, did so with poles on their shoulders in order not to touch the ark itself. The event

For meditation and context:

Corinthians = kohr-IN-thee-uhnz

A reading in which Paul insists on the victory over death that results from the defiance of sin gained through Christ's sacrifice.

In this quotation, emphasize the first and last word in each italicized line.

Note the rhythm of these two lines, each of which has three beats: sting, death, sin, and power, sin, law.

TO KEEP IN MIND

Make eye contact with the assembly. This helps keep the assembly engaged with the reading.

was so sacred that the musical instruments could only be played by members of the tribe of Levi, and David himself offered the offerings of well-being before the ark. The offering of well-being was a burnt offering, part of which was given to God and part to the people, thus establishing communion with God. What a splendid affair!

READING II In today's second reading, Paul completes his lengthy teaching on resurrection of the body with a powerful exclamatory statement about what

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Psalm 132:6-7, 9-10, 13-14 (8)

R. Lord, go up to the place of your rest, you and the ark of your holiness.

Behold, we heard of it in Ephrathah;
we found it in the fields of Jaar.
Let us enter into his dwelling,
let us worship at his footstool.

For the LORD has chosen Zion;
he prefers her for his dwelling.
"Zion is my resting place forever;
in her will I dwell, for I prefer her."

May your priests be clothed with justice;
let your faithful ones shout merrily for joy.
For the sake of David your servant,
reject not the plea of your anointed.

READING II 1 Corinthians 15:54b-57

A reading from the first Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians

Brothers and sisters:

When **that** which is mortal clothes itself with immortality,
then the **word** that is written shall come about:

Death is swallowed up in victory.

Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?

The **sting** of death is sin,
and the **power** of sin is the law.
But **thanks** be to God who gives us the victory
through our Lord Jesus Christ.

it will be like to inherit the kingdom of God at the end time. He has already made the point that the corruptible body—that is, the physical body which decays—cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Rather, at the end time, a trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible—that is, with an immortal spiritual body. When this happens, Paul says, the words of Scripture will be fulfilled. Paul's quotation is a loose conflation of Isaiah 25:8 and Hosea 13:14, which results in a beautifully poetic statement about death being swallowed up in victory.

In his Letter to the Romans, Paul states even more clearly than in today's reading that death came into the world through sin (see Romans 5:12) and that humanity did not know sin except through Jewish law, but that sin took advantage of the law to make us want what we should not have (Romans 7:7-13). This is what Paul means here, when he says, "the sting of death is sin" and "the power of sin is the law." But just as God raised Jesus from the dead in triumph over sin and death, we too, with our transformed bodies, will be raised in victory over death.

A short but intense Gospel reading in which an exhortation is embedded in a brief narrative. This reading can seem like a rebuke or at least a correction on Jesus' part. Instead, consider it an intensification of the excited statement made by the woman in the crowd.

Don't change your tone at "Rather." Instead, treat what Jesus says as an affirmation and furthering of what the woman has said.

GOSPEL Luke 11:27–28

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke

While Jesus was speaking,
 a woman from the crowd called out and said to him,
 "Blessed is the womb that carried you
 and the breasts at which you nursed."
 He replied,
 "Rather, blessed are those
 who hear the word of God and observe it."

GOSPEL

Our Gospel reading is very short but certainly relevant for this feast. It is part of a longer segment of Luke's Gospel in which Jesus responds to the accusation from some in the crowd that he drives out demons by the power of Satan (Luke 11:14–26) and to their demand for a sign from heaven before they will accept his testimony (Luke 11:29–36). In the first response, Jesus argues that he is actually the enemy of Satan and that he drives out demons by the power of God. In the second response, he turns the tables on his accusers, calling them an evil generation

and telling them that the only sign he will give them is the sign of Jonah—a reference to how the people of Nineveh repented when they heard Jonah's preaching—and the great distance from which the queen of the south came to hear Solomon's words. Finally, Jesus delivers the decisive blow against his opponents by saying that they have someone greater than Solomon or Jonah in their midst and they do not see him because they are living in darkness and cannot see the light of truth.

This is the backdrop for today's Gospel reading. Against Jesus' opponents who

refuse to acknowledge the power of his word, a woman in the crowd shouts out "Blessed is the womb that carried you." In so doing, she is defending Jesus' honor and countering the charge that his power comes from Satan. Jesus' response to her encapsules all that needs to be said about discipleship—"Blessed are those who hear the word of God and observe it." Thankfully, we can call on Mary to be our guide in our journey of discipleship, because she is blessed on both counts! C.C.