

August 31st

Saints JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA and NICODEMUS

Elsewhere: Optional memorial

According to the Gospels, Joseph of Arimathea was a pious and influential Jew, perhaps a member of the Sanhedrin (Mark 15: 43), who "was waiting expectantly for the Kingdom of God," a "good and righteous man" (Luke 23: 50). He was a secret disciple of Christ, but after the crucifixion, it was he who had the courage (Mark 15: 43) to ask Pilate for Jesus' body and buried him in a new tomb that had been hewn in the rock close by. Nicodemus was also a member of the Sanhedrin, a Pharisee attracted to Jesus, whom John (3: 1-10) presents as having come by night to question the Master. He was to join Joseph of Arimathea and bury Jesus (John 19: 39-40).

The four evangelists tell us in detail how the Lord's body was embalmed and buried. They want to prove by this that Christ, by his incarnation, had indeed assumed a mortal body like ours (as Mark says in 15: 43, Joseph goes to Pilate to ask for the "corpse" of Jesus), and that he really was dead. The resurrection of Christ is a real "resurrection from the dead" as attested by Paul (1 Cor 15: 12 and Acts 13: 30), and hence it is our belief that for us too, death will not have the last word: "as in Adam all die, so all will be made alive in Christ" (1 Cor 15: 22).

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON: John 19: 39-40

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took Jesus' body, and in accordance with Jewish burial custom bound it up in wrapping of cloth with perfumed oils.

COLLECT

O God, in your infinite goodness you chose Saints Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus to bury in a new tomb the body of your most beloved Son taken down from the cross. May we, rendered similar to your Son in death and buried with him, also rise with him to everlasting life.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ...

FIRST READING

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles 13: 16. 26-31

So Paul got up, motioned with his hand, and said, "Fellow Israelites and you others who are God-fearing, listen. "My brothers, children of the family of Abraham, and those others among you who are God-fearing, to us this word of salvation has been sent. The inhabitants of Jerusalem and their leaders failed to recognize him, and by condemning him they fulfilled the oracles of the prophets that are read Sabbath after Sabbath. For even though they found no grounds for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him put to death, and when they had accomplished all that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and placed him in a tomb. But God raised him from the dead, and for many days he appeared to those who had come up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. These are (now) his witnesses before the people.

The Word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Ps 16: 1-2. 5. 7-8. 9-10. (R. 10b)

R. For you will not let your holy one see corruption.

1. Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.
I say to the LORD, "You are my LORD.

O LORD, it is you who are my portion and cup;
you yourself who secure my lot.

2. I will bless the LORD who gives me counsel,
who even at night directs my heart.
I keep the LORD before me always;
with him at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

3. And so, my heart rejoices, my soul is glad;
even my flesh shall rest in hope.
For you will not abandon my soul to hell,
nor let your holy one see corruption.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

R. Alleluia. Alleluia.
Christ has risen, leaving the tomb empty, and has enlightened us.
R. Alleluia.

GOSPEL

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John 19: 38-42

After this, Joseph of Arimathea, secretly a disciple of Jesus for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate if he could remove the body of Jesus. And Pilate permitted it. So he came and took his body. Nicodemus, the one who had first come to him at night, also came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes weighing about one hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus and bound it with burial cloths along with the spices, according to the Jewish burial custom. Now in the place where he had been crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had yet been buried. So they laid Jesus there because of the Jewish preparation day; for the tomb was close by.
The gospel of the Lord.

Or else:

A reading from the holy Gospel according to John 3: 1-16

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. He came to Jesus at night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you are doing unless God is with him." Jesus answered and said to him, "Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus said to him, "How can a person once grown old be born again? Surely he cannot reenter his mother's womb and be born again, can he?" Jesus answered, "Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of flesh is flesh and what is born of spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I told you, 'You must be born from above.' The wind blows where it wills, and you can hear the sound it makes, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes; so it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit." Nicodemus answered and said to him, "How can this happen?" Jesus answered and said to him, "You are the teacher of Israel and you do not understand this? Amen, amen, I say to you, we speak of what we know and we testify to what we have seen, but you people do not accept our testimony. If I tell you about earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has gone up to heaven except the one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life." For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life.

The Word of the Lord.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

Accept, o Lord, the offering we bring to your altar in devout memory of Saints Joseph and Nicodemus, and grant your people the gifts of unity and of peace.

Through Christ our Lord.

PREFACE

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts...

COMMUNION ANTIPHON John 3: 16

God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him may not die but may have eternal life.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

O Lord, you willed to be laid in a new tomb by Saints Joseph and Nicodemus, and to rise gloriously on the third day. May we, who have been nourished at the banquet of your Body and Blood, become sharers in the glory of your resurrection.

Through Christ our Lord.