

COLLECT: (*Remain Standing*)

Eternal God, who raised up Phoebe as a deacon in your church and minister of your Gospel; Grant us that same grace that, assisted by her prayers and example, we too may take the Gospel to the ends of the earth; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Job 12:1, 13:3-17, 21-27 (*Please be seated*)

Reader: A reading from the book of Job.

Then Job answered:

But I would speak to the Almighty,
and I desire to argue my case with God.

As for you, you whitewash with lies;
all of you are worthless physicians.

If you would only keep silent,
that would be your wisdom!

Hear now my reasoning,
and listen to the pleadings of my lips.

Will you speak falsely for God,
and speak deceitfully for him?

Will you show partiality towards him,
will you plead the case for God?

Will it be well with you when he searches
you out?

Or can you deceive him, as one person
deceives another?

He will surely rebuke you
if in secret you show partiality.

Will not his majesty terrify you,
and the dread of him fall upon you?

Your maxims are proverbs of ashes,
your defences are defences of clay.

‘Let me have silence, and I will speak,
and let come on me what may.

I will take my flesh in my teeth,

and put my life in my hand.

See, he will kill me; I have no hope;

but I will defend my ways to his face.

This will be my salvation,

that the godless shall not come before
him.

Listen carefully to my words,

and let my declaration be in your ears.

Withdraw your hand far from me,

and do not let dread of you terrify me.

Then call, and I will answer;

or let me speak, and you reply to me.

How many are my iniquities and my sins?

Make me know my transgression and my
sin.

Why do you hide your face,

and count me as your enemy?

Will you frighten a windblown leaf

and pursue dry chaff?

For you write bitter things against me,

and make me reap the iniquities of my
youth.

You put my feet in the stocks,

and watch all my paths;

you set a bound to the soles of my feet.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God

Psalm

Reader: Let us pray together the words of **Psalm 26**.

1 Give judgment for me, O Lord,
for I have lived with integrity; *
I have trusted in the Lord and have not faltered.

2 Test me, O Lord, and try me; *
examine my heart and my mind.

3 For your love is before my eyes; *
I have walked faithfully with you.

4 I have not sat with the worthless, *
nor do I consort with the deceitful.

5 I have hated the company of evildoers; *
I will not sit down with the wicked.

6 I will wash my hands in innocence, O Lord, *
that I may go in procession round your altar,

7 Singing aloud a song of thanksgiving *
and recounting all your wonderful deeds.

8 Lord, I love the house in which you dwell *
and the place where your glory abides.

9 Do not sweep me away with sinners, *
nor my life with those who thirst for blood,

10 Whose hands are full of evil plots, *
and their right hand full of bribes.

11 As for me, I will live with integrity; *
redeem me, O Lord, and have pity on me.

12 My foot stands on level ground; *
in the full assembly I will bless the Lord.

Acts 12:1-17 *(Please be seated)*

Reader: A reading from the book of Acts.

And Saul approved of their killing him.

About that time King Herod laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword. After he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. (This was during the festival of Unleavened Bread.) When he had seized him, he put him in prison and handed him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending to bring him out to the people after the Passover. While Peter was kept in prison, the church prayed fervently to God for him.

The very night before Herod was going to bring him out, Peter, bound with two chains, was sleeping between two soldiers, while guards in front of the door were keeping watch over the prison. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on the side and woke him, saying, 'Get up quickly.' And the chains fell off his wrists. The angel said to him, 'Fasten your belt and put on your sandals.' He did so. Then he said to him, 'Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.' Peter went out and followed him; he did not realize that what was happening with the angel's help was real; he thought he was seeing a vision. After they had passed the first and the second guard, they came before the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went outside and walked along a lane, when suddenly the angel left him. Then Peter came to himself and said, 'Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hands of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.'

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As soon as he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many had gathered and were praying. When he knocked at the outer gate, a maid named Rhoda came to answer. On recognizing Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the gate, she ran in and announced that Peter was standing at the gate. They said to her, 'You are out of your mind!' But she insisted that it was so. They said, 'It is his angel.' Meanwhile, Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the gate, they saw him and were amazed. He motioned to them with his hand to be silent, and described for them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he added, 'Tell this to James and to the believers.' Then he left and went to another place.

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

John 8:33-47 *(Please stand as you are able)*

Priest: The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

People: Glory to you, Lord Christ.

They answered him, 'We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, "You will be made free"?''

Jesus answered them, 'Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there for ever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed. I know that you are descendants of Abraham; yet you look for an opportunity to kill me, because there is no place in you for my word. I declare what I have seen in the Father's presence; as for you, you should do what you have heard from the Father.'

They answered him, 'Abraham is our father.' Jesus said to them, 'If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing what Abraham did, but now you are trying to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. This is not what Abraham did. You are indeed doing what your father does.' They said to him, 'We are not illegitimate children; we have one father, God himself.' Jesus said to them, 'If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now I am here. I did not come on my own, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot accept my word. You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not believe me. Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is from God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear them is that you are not from God.'

Priest: The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Christ