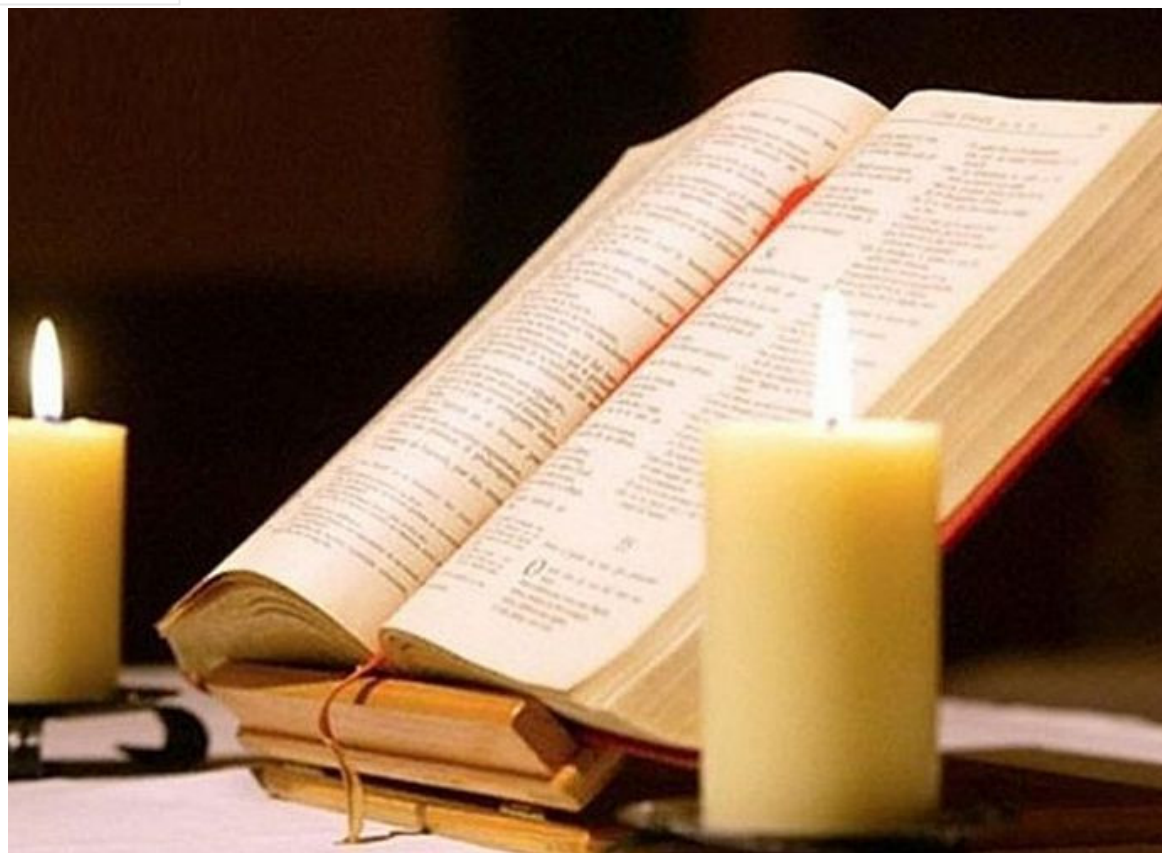


GOSPEL PEARLS

A lesson on martyrdom

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And Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, no prophet is acceptable in his hometown. But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heavens were shut up three years and six months, and a great famine came over all the land, and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and drove him out of the town and

brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. But passing through their midst, he went away. (Luke 4: 24-30)

Until his hour came, Jesus had eluded his adversaries who, influenced by Satan, wanted to kill him by throwing him off the side of a cliff. The Lord miraculously walked away "quietly" in the midst of an angry crowd. This teaches us that we are not always called to martyrdom and, indeed, that it is right to try to save one's life. However, when there is no alternative to saving one's faith, in addition to one's life, then it is time to offer up one's life for Christ. So the martyrs even gave up their lives not because of their strength or courage. That is why when faced with the possibility of being killed in order to remain faithful to Jesus we feel that we do not have the strength to do so. In reality, the martyrs did not have the strength either, but they trusted in their Master and Lord and it was He who gave them the strength to face their martyrdom. Only in this way, can we accept everything we do for the Lord and, above all, accept it with love. In this way, we can be certain that our suffering will not be in vain, as Jesus showed us when he accepted His own Cross.