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Memorial of St Andrew Dũng-Lạc, priest and martyr, and Companions, martyrs

Date: Monday, November 24, 2025 | **Season:** Ordinary Time after Easter | **Year:** C
First Reading: Daniel 1:1–6, 8–20
Responsorial Psalm: Daniel 3:52–56 | **Response:** Daniel 3:52b
Gospel Acclamation: Matthew 24:42a, 44
Gospel Reading: Luke 21:1–4
Preached at: the Chapel of Xolile Keteyi House **in the** Archdiocese of Durban, South Africa**.**

Dear friends in Christ, the Scriptures today begin with a story that many parents might enjoy quoting at the dinner table. In our first reading from the Prophet Daniel, the young exiles grow healthy and wise not on royal meals but on vegetables and water. It is as if the Scriptures quietly say to every child: eat your vegetables, because even the simplest food can strengthen your body and your heart. This moment shows us how grace often works through *ordinary* choices, especially the ones that help us stay faithful when life tries to pull us in different directions.

Daniel and his companions live far from home, under pressure to forget their identity. They are given new names, new customs, new expectations. Their captors want to reshape them slowly, not by force but by gentle pressure. Daniel answers with a modest but steady choice. His decision about food looks small, but it protects his memory of God, and it becomes a sign of inner freedom in a place that wanted to take that freedom away.

The canticle from Daniel shows what steady trust becomes when it is tested. The three friends stand in the furnace and their words rise like a morning prayer. In fact, the Church still uses this canticle every week in the Liturgy of the Hours, inviting us to bless God even when life feels like it is tightening around us. Their praise grows stronger in the heat, not because the danger is gone, but because they sense that God is with them inside it.

Our gospel brings us into the Temple, where a widow drops two coins into the treasury. They make only a small sound, yet Jesus hears the whole truth of her offering. The Gospel tells us she gives her life, not her leftovers. Her gift echoes

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the heart of almsgiving: not the size of what we give, but the love and trust behind it. Her simple act becomes a quiet lesson in generosity for every age and every country.

This same quiet strength echoes in the lives of the saints we honour today: Saint Andrew Dũng-Lạc and the many companions who walked the same road of faith. Their witness was formed over years, not just in the final moment of martyrdom. Andrew's story begins long before prison and trial. As a twelve-year-old boy he meets a catechist who teaches him about Christ, and something settles deep within him. Many of his companions had similar beginnings: simple families, small acts of service, quiet courage that grew over time. In their baptisms, in their prayer, in their care for the poor, the seed of faith took root. So when persecution swept across Vietnam and Christians were branded, hunted, and pressured to abandon the Gospel, they held steady. They prayed, they taught, they comforted their people, each one offering his or her own small courage to God.

When we listen to these readings from our own lives here in South Africa, they feel surprisingly close. Many people around us face slow, steady pressures: rising costs that stretch families thin, the fear that safety cannot be taken for granted, the worry of young people who hold hopes without seeing clear paths ahead. These are not blazing furnaces, but they test the soul in daily ways.

And yet, we also see countless small acts of courage that help our communities stand firm. A neighbour sharing supper with someone who has none. A teacher who refuses to give up on her class. A worker who stays honest when shortcuts would be easier. A young person who chooses patience when frustration rises. These choices protect our dignity and remind us who we are.

Ignatius invites us to enter the scenes of Scripture. So take a moment to imagine standing beside Daniel as he makes his modest request. Notice what stirs in your own heart. Picture the widow's hands as she releases her coins and hear their soft sound. Let it echo in your own choices. Walk with Andrew Dũng-Lạc as he returns to serve his people after imprisonment. Ask what keeps him steady, and what that steadiness might teach you.

Courage often comes dressed in simple choices. It grows quietly, like strength built from vegetables and water. It grows through daily prayers, quiet giving, and the steady refusal to forget who we are in God's eyes.

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Before our reflection continues, let us offer a short prayer together:

Lord God, through the prayers of Saint Andrew Dũng-Lạc and his companions, give us steady hearts. Help us stay faithful in small things. Help us give generously, love humbly, and trust you in the pressures we face. Be with us in our own furnaces, and guide us with your gentle light. Amen.

As you pray this morning, you might reflect on these questions:

- Where am I being invited to stay faithful through a small, steady decision?
- What simple act of generosity or honesty is God asking of me this week?
- How can the witness of the martyrs strengthen my courage in the real pressures of life in South Africa?

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In preparing this homily, I consulted various resources to deepen my understanding of today's readings, including using Magisterium AI for assistance. The final content remains the responsibility of the author.