

THE READING

Numbers 22:21-41

21Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey and went with the princes of Moab. **22**But God was very angry when he went, and the angel of the Lord stood in the road to oppose him. Balaam was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. **23**When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with a drawn sword in his hand, she turned off the road into a field. Balaam beat her to get her back on the road. **24**Then the angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path between two vineyards, with walls on both sides. **25**When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord , she pressed close to the wall, crushing Balaam's foot against it. So he beat her again. **26**Then the angel of the Lord moved on ahead and stood in a narrow place where there was no room to turn, either to the right or to the left. **27**When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord , she lay down under Balaam, and he was angry and beat her with his staff. **28**Then the Lord opened the donkey's mouth, and she said to Balaam, "What have I done to you to make you beat me these three times?" **29**Balaam answered the donkey, "You have made a fool of me! If I had a sword in my hand, I

would kill you right now." 30The donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden, to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you?" "No," he said. 31Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell facedown. 32The angel of the Lord asked him, "Why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me. 33The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If she had not turned away, I would certainly have killed you by now, but I would have spared her." 34Balaam said to the angel of the Lord, "I have sinned. I did not realize you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now if you are displeased, I will go back." 35The angel of the Lord said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but speak only what I tell you." So Balaam went with the princes of Balak. 36When Balak heard that Balaam was coming, he went out to meet him at the Moabite town on the Arnon border, at the edge of his territory. 37Balak said to Balaam, "Did I not send you an urgent summons? Why didn't you come to me? Am I really not able to reward you?" 38"Well, I have come to you now," Balaam replied. "But can I say just anything? I must speak only what

God puts in my mouth." 39Then Balaam went with Balak to Kiriath Huzoth. 40Balak sacrificed cattle and sheep, and gave some to Balaam and the princes who were with him. 41The next morning Balak took Balaam up to Bamoth Baal, and from there he saw part of the people. This is the word of the Lord.