

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time: Resurrection of the Dead and the Life of the World to Come

2 Maccabees 7:1-2,9-14; Psalm 17:1,5-6,8,15; 2 Thessalonians 2:16-3:5; Luke 20:27-38

Will our earthly relationships now still matter in the Resurrection of the dead? Our immediate answer is yes; however, it is a different relationship because it is entirely in communion with the love of God.

The riddle introduced by the Sadducees is a ridicule of the faith of the seven brothers in the first reading. They were tortured horribly because of their faith. They confessed that God has the power to sustain and restore life and believe that their fidelity guarantees life after death. The Sadducees are a prominent group of believers like the Pharisees. But unlike the Pharisees, they did not believe in the Resurrection from the dead. In their confrontation with Jesus, they tried to expose the irrationality of believing in the Resurrection by using Jewish law. If the woman gets widowed, her husband's brother must take her and have a child with her. The child is considered a child of his dead brother. It is a practice to ensure that the life of a brother who died would be continued. The riddle is: since she is married to seven brothers, who will be her husband if there is a resurrection from the dead?

The Lord's response has something crucial to say to all of us. "In the Resurrection from the dead, we do not marry. There's no more need for marriage. Why? Because in the Resurrection from the dead, there will be no more death. And so marriage, as a way to propagate life, is no longer needed because we have attained eternal life. We will live in the presence of the God of the living, the God of creation, who sustains and restores life. The love of husband and wife here on earth, which tries to survive to be an image of God's faithfulness to the world, will be perfected in heaven, and it is no longer exclusive. Meaning you will love your spouse fully, even your ex-spouses. It doesn't matter whether you are married or not. What matters is the perfection of love. This is the Resurrection, sharing, and living in the life of God. When Jesus says that our God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it means that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are in the presence of the living God.

For those who are faithful to God or genuinely living in God's presence, it shapes the quality of their life, the way they live, and their relationship with others have been life-giving. This is a glimpse of the reality of Resurrection. Resurrection is not just a continuation of life here on earth; it is a radically new existence, being fully present in God. Though this is difficult to imagine, with the help of St. Paul in our second reading, we know that our relationship with God now can give us a foretaste of the risen life.

What is the relevance of our belief in a resurrection from the dead?

First, our faith in life after death consoles us with the hope that human life will not end in vain. In the Gospel of John, Jesus states that we will have eternal life if we believe in him. He is "the way, the truth and the life" (Jn 14:6). He also says that in the Kingdom of his Father, there are many rooms, and he will go ahead of us to prepare a place for us (Jn 14:2-4). By rising from the dead, Jesus has shown that he has complete power over death and that death has no power over him. If we remain faithful to Jesus, we, too, will share eternal life with him.

Second, it inspires us to look forward to something most beautiful. Saint Paul declares that "no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him" (1 Cor 2:9). Our patroness St. Therese looked at eternal life as our true home, and how we live our earthly life matters in getting there. She said, "The world's thy ship and not thy home." Her words remind us that we are travelers in this world, and the true purpose of our life is to be united with God in heaven. Indeed, our celebration of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is a foretaste of heaven. Through the Holy Eucharist, heaven comes down to us! Our Lord Jesus makes himself tangibly accessible for all who believe in him and accomplishes it through our communion with him in the Holy Eucharist. In the institution narrative of the Holy Mass, we hear Jesus' words, "This is my Body... take and eat. This is my Blood... receive and drink." He assures eternal life to those who believe and receive him, he said, "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood will have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day" (Jn 6:54). He has given us the most personal and intimate gift – the gift of his presence-- because he loved us "to the end" and longs to be with us, even thirsts for us (cf Jn 13:1). Isn't it beautiful?

Finally, it compels us to witness even the most radical demands of our faith. The first reading narrates the moving story of seven brothers who bravely chose torture and death rather than abandon their faith in God. One of the brothers, tortured limb by limb, said to his tormentors, "You are depriving us of this life, but the true King will raise us to live again forever" (2 Mac 7:9). Another brother said, "It is my choice to die at the hands of men with the God-given hope of being restored to life by Him" (2 Mac 7:14). Their strong faith had given them the courage to disobey the orders of a wicked king even when it meant sure death. Faith is a gift from God that helps us thrive amid the pain and suffering of this world, which St. Paul prayed to bestow upon the Thessalonians and encouraged them to persevere (cf 2 Thess. 2:15). He assured them, "the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you against the evil one" (2Thes 3:3). And then, towards the end, he prayed, "May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and the endurance of Christ" (2 Thes 3:5). Without the gift of faith, who could survive meaningfully?

We may not face the same extreme choice the seven brothers were asked to make. Nonetheless, we live in a world beset with evils that, more often than not, cast a shadow of hopelessness. But we have great reason to hope for Jesus, who is risen from the dead. God has given us his word: He is the living God! When we awaken from the sleep of death, we will behold his face, and our joy will be complete with his presence.

God bless you.

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