

Thirty Second Sunday in Ordinary Time C2022

I want to start this homily by sharing with you an anecdote from an experience of life. I grew up in a city moderately big, with a population close to fifteen thousand people. The city had three parishes, three high schools and many elementary schools. In the city, there were many merchants whose one was relatively successful. His dream of life was always to one day buy a Mercedes Car. In that type of the world and in those days, to have a Mercedes car was quite an achievement. Unfortunately the year he got the Mercedes car he was diagnosed with a cancer. And after a couple of months later he died.

As he was sick he was complaining that life was unfair to him. He could not understand why just at the time of the peak of his life and business, he had to die and leave his goods to others. He would prefer to be alive and enjoy the fruits of his hard work, but that was impossible.

By thinking of that man I remember how full of regret and bitterness he was. Perhaps he would be consoled if there existed, after death, the possibility of continuing the life he had on earth, surrounded by his good. The reality, however, was dramatically drastic because life after death was something very different, which had nothing to do with the life we spend on earth

That is what our Lord tells the Sadducees who confronted him with the strange story of a woman who married seven brothers. First of all, who were the Sadducees? The Sadducees were one of the important religious groups in Jewish society. Unlike the Pharisees and the Scribes, they accepted as Scripture only the written Law of Moses and rejected the authority of oral tradition. In the same way, they did not accept the existence of the angels or the spirits. Neither did they believe in the resurrection of the dead.

By coming to Jesus their concern was not to get some knowledge from him about the Scriptures, but rather to ridicule him about the resurrection of the dead. Their case was well construed around the Law of Levirate we find in Deuteronomy 25: 5-10. That law states that if a man dies without a son, his brother can marry the widow and give him an heir. The first-born son of that marriage was considered the child of the deceased brother and had to continue his line.

The case the Sadducees bring to Jesus was really complicated, because, if we accept the resurrection of the dead, then, to whom shall the woman belong in the life after death, given that all the seven brothers took her as wife?

In a very clear way, our Lord responds to their question without ambiguity: after death, there is no marriage. Therefore, the question is not only useless, but irrelevant. In fact, after death, those who are deemed worthy of God's kingdom can no longer die. They are like angels and immortal; they are no more subject to human passions and desires like earthly human beings. They are the children of God, destined to rise; they do not need marriage any more.

Put in other words, our Lord tells the Sadducees that they are seriously wrong to represent life after death as the continuation of the present life with its passions and emotions or as its improvement. Life after death is something completely new, a new life

with God for an eternal happiness. There is no comparison between human lives as we live it here on earth, and the resurrection shared by those who are children of God in heaven.

Death is not a break in our life, but an entrance into the proximity of God where there will be no more pain or suffering, no more tears, but a complete bliss of seeing God face to face, of being in the presence of the One who has given us life. The resurrection of the dead does not mean reincarnation or re-adaptation of human life to new reality, but rather the beginning of a new history of our life with God in his kingdom. That is what we celebrated a couple of days ago in the feasts of All Saints and All Souls.

What is the basis for all these Claims? These claims are based on the fact that our God is not a God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive. If Moses called “Lord” the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and not of the dead, then, God will continue to be so for all who die in him.

In other words, God is a living God. Because he is a living God, he gives life to everything that lives in the world. Our own life is a participation in the life of God. We live because God shares his life within us. God’s life cannot die. As long as God lives, and yet he lives eternally, we will live with him. That is the very reason of our hope in the resurrection of the dead.

But, there is more to this story of resurrection: Jesus himself is our witness and example of what it means to live, die and rise. His resurrection is the foundation of our faith and hope in the eternal life. Faith in the resurrection sheds light on everything we do in this world, including our pains and sufferings in the present world. It modifies our whole way of looking at human existence and the problems of this world. We face the challenges of this world with serenity and we look forward to the future with hope because we believe that there is more to life than what we now see and now live.

The hope of eternal life and the resurrection of the dead is what gave courage to the seven brothers and their mother to endure death with serenity, as we heard in the first reading. Instead of denying their faith, they accepted death. Their courage to endure death comes from the conviction that, even if they physically die, God will give them life again; he will raise them up.

Let us yearn, my Brothers and sisters, for our resurrection from the dead. Let us live on earth in such way that at the end of our pilgrimage on earth we will be found worthy to share in the resurrection of Jesus. God bless you.

2 Maccabees 7: 1-2, 9-14; 2 Thessalonians 2: 16-3: 5; Luke 20: 27-38



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