

November 6 XXXII Sunday in Ordinary Time

Introduction: As we near the end of the Church's liturgical year, the readings become more eschatological — having to do with the end times. The main theme of today's readings is the reality of life after death and of the relationship between our lives on earth and the life of glory or punishment that will follow. The readings invite us to consider the true meaning of the Resurrection in our lives.

The first reading describes a Jewish family, consisting of a mother and her seven sons, who refuse their conqueror's command to eat pork, forbidden as "unclean" by Jewish Law. Because of their obedient Faith in God, they endure suffering and accept martyrdom. During their torture, three of the brothers speak, and each of them finds strength in the belief that he will eventually be raised and rewarded by God.

We see the first century BC Jewish theology of martyrdom and the resurrection of the just. The intense sufferings to which good Jews were subjected brought them to the conviction that the justice of God would reward the faithful in the afterlife and would also punish the wicked.

The second reading was meant to encourage the Thessalonians who were waiting for the Parousia (the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead), to trust in the fidelity of God. It was also meant to open their eyes to the fact that the Lord would strengthen their hearts in every good work and word. The same theme, the resurrection of the dead, is the basis of the confrontation described in today's Gospel passage.

Today's Gospel affirms the victory of God and God's love over the power of death. Jesus speaks of God as the God of the living, Who promises that the ones who will rise to life in Heaven are God's children. The Gospel shows us how Jesus ingeniously escaped from a doctrinal trap set for him and explained the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead which was supported by the Pharisees but denied by the Sadducees. Jesus also explains that heavenly life with God in glory is totally different from earthly life, and that there is no marriage in Heaven in the earthly sense.

According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, our belief in the resurrection is based upon a Faith-relationship with God as Creator. “God revealed the resurrection of the dead to His people progressively” (CCC #992). Resurrection is implied in the earlier books of the Old Testament, becomes clearer in the later books and is emphatically asserted in II Maccabees. The teaching of Jesus and the Apostles on this topic is crystal clear in the New Testament. Hence, the whole of Christian theology is based on the belief in our resurrection and everlasting life of reward or punishment.

We need to live as people of the Resurrection: This means that we are not to lie buried in the tomb of our sins and evil habits. Instead, we are to live joyful and peaceful lives, constantly experiencing the real Presence of the Risen Lord who gives us the assurance that our bodies also will be raised. In addition, the hope of our resurrection and eternal life with God gives us lasting peace and celestial joy amid the boredom and tension of our day-to-day lives. An awareness of the all-pervading presence of the Spirit of the living God. will help us to control our thoughts, desires, words and behavior. The salutary thought of our own resurrection and eternal glory should also inspire us to honor our bodies, keeping them holy, pure, and free from evil habits, and to respect those with whom we come in contact, rendering them loving and humble service.

We need to offer living worship to a living God. The reason we come together each week to pray for the needs of the community, share the Word and break the Bread is that we have Faith and Hope in a living God Who loves us and Whom we love. If God is the God of the living, should not worship of this God also be alive? Our worship services and relation to God must be life-giving rather than life-draining experiences. Unfortunately, Holy Mass and other worship services are often described as “dead” or “boring.” Even Church volunteers sometimes complain of being exhausted in their work. The proclamation that our God is the God of the living has to mean something positive to us. It should affect our lives today and every day, especially during our Sunday worship. In response to Him, our participation in prayers and songs during the Holy Mass should be active and our behavior in Church reverent, though not gloomy. As we continue our Eucharist celebration and gather around the Table of the Lord, let us give thanks to Almighty God for this foretaste of the Heavenly Banquet that awaits us in the place that God has prepared for us.