

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time C/2010

The readings of this Sunday talk about the importance of the resurrection of the body. They invite us to reflect on the reality of life after death and the resurrection of the dead as a central element of our Christian faith.

The first reading describes a tragedy of seven brothers who died with their mother in defense of their faith in God. At that time, indeed, Israel was invaded by the King of Syria who strove to impose on the Hebrews a foreign culture and religious habits contrary to the Law of Moses. Touched in their love of God, the seven brothers and their mother refused to violate the law and to eat the prohibited meats. Instead they preferred to die rather than to be unfaithful to God and to the laws of their ancestors.

What was behind the courageous act of this family was, first of all, the hope for a better future that God prepares for those who love him and which nothing in this world can give us. Moreover, what determined them to die was also the conviction that, even if they die, God who has created them will give them life back and raise them up.

All that helps us understand what is at stake in today's Gospel in the discussion between Jesus and the Sadducees over the resurrection of the dead. For the Sadducees, in fact, there is no resurrection for the dead. As they denied the resurrection, they rejected the authority of oral tradition and the existence of angels or spirits. The only authority they recognized was the Scriptures. Everything else that could not refer to the written Law of Moses, including the prophetic books, was not binding for them.

It is in that context, they came to Jesus in order to confront him over the resurrection of the dead. As matter of fact, what they wanted was just to ridicule him about the resurrection by referring to the Law on Levirate as stated in the book of Deuteronomy 25, 5. According to that law, if a man dies without children, his brother can marry the widow and give him an heir. Children born from such a union were considered as the children of the one who died.

What is important to know here is that in the time of Jesus this practice was not operative anymore, even if it was part of Moses' regulations. Whatever might be the evolution of the situation, however, it is good to say that the case the Sadducees brought to Jesus was a true dilemma, because, if the resurrection was true, then, one should prove really to whom the wife would belong after death.

Sensing their malice, Jesus gives them an answer without ambiguity. No; after death, there is no marriage. There is only life without end and without any shadow of things we live on earth. In that sense, the question of marriage becomes not only useless, but also irrelevant.

For Jesus, those who enter God's kingdom can no longer die. They are not subjected to human passions and desires like people who live on earth. Rather, they are like angels and immortal. Their true identity is being children of God who are risen from death; they do not need marriage any more.

According to these words of Jesus, the Sadducees are wrong to think of heaven in terms of this earth. On the contrary, life there will be different, because people will be different. Life in heaven cannot just be the continuation of the present life with its passions and emotions. It will be something completely new, a new life with God for an eternal happiness. That is why, for Jesus, there is no comparison between human life on earth and the life of the resurrection we are hoping for.

In that perspective, death is not a just break in our life, but an entry into God's presence where there will be no more pain, no more suffering, no more tears. What awaits us over there is a complete bliss in the presence of God. In the same way, the resurrection of the dead does not mean a reincarnation, but a beginning of a new history of our life with God in his kingdom.

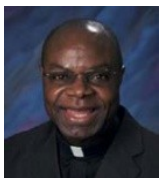
All these claims are based on the fact that our God is not a God of the dead, but of the living, because in him all are alive. If Moses called "Lord" the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and not of the dead, then God will continue to be so for all those who believe in him and die in him.

Because God is alive, he gives life to everything that lives in the world. Our own life is ours in so far as it is a participation in the life of God. We live because God shares his life with us. That is the reason of our hope in the resurrection of the dead. Our life is divine; therefore, it is eternal. Because our life belongs to God, it cannot die. As long as God lives, we will live with him.

It is here that lies the key of our faith in Jesus Christ and our hope for eternal life. Because of that hope, we are called to renew God's life within us by living according to the spirit of Jesus, and not according to the standards of the world. If we walk that path, it is absolutely clear that at the end of our pilgrimage on earth we will come to live eternally with God in his kingdom.

Faith in the resurrection sheds light on everything we do in this world. It gives us the courage to support the pains, sufferings and contradictions of the present life, because we believe that things can be different. It changes our whole way of looking at human existence and the problems of this world.

That faith must be supported by our life of prayer. That is what St. Paul recommends us to do. In that sense, we have to pray for one another, encouraging one another and strengthening one another in every good deed and word. In time of adversity and crisis, we have to pray so that we may be delivered from perverse and wicked people. We have to prayer so that the Lord may strengthen us and keep us from the evil one until the last day of our life when we will see him face to face and share in his eternal life. May God bless you all!



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