

Thirty-Second Sunday in Ord. Time C/2013

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 content of what we call eternal life. They also remind us how the resurrection of the dead is a central element of our Christian faith.

The first reading of the book of Maccabees describes a tragedy that befell a Jewish family of seven brothers who died with their mother. As they were arrested and tortured by the invading king of Syria, forcing them to eat the meat prohibited by the Law of Moses, they persisted and chose not to eat the meat rather than violating God's law.

As they were killed one by one with atrocity, they all showed an exceptional courage at the astonishment of the king and his attendants. They all accepted suffering with joy and so died in their body because of the hope they had in eternal life. They firmly believed that God, who has created them, was capable of giving them life again by raising them from the dead.

What is behind this text is the idea that the love of God and his grace makes some people so strong that they can endure all kinds of suffering for the sake of God's kingdom. Another idea is the truth that the hope of the resurrection of the dead arouses in those who love God a firm conviction that compels them to die because of the promise of eternal life.

This text allows us to understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as Jesus is confronted by the Sadducees over the issue of the resurrection of the dead. First of all, the Gospel says that the Sadducees do not believe in the resurrection of the dead.

In order to embarrass Jesus, they ask him a tricky question about a woman who married seven brothers one by one before dying herself. The reason she married all seven was that, according to the Law of Moses as stated in Deuteronomy 25: 5, if someone died without leaving children, the brother had to marry the widow in order to raise up descendants for him.

Unfortunately, all the seven brothers took that woman for wife and died without children. Then, the question is to know to whom she would belong at the resurrection of the dead, given that all had her as wife.

Sensing deeply the intrigue of their question, Jesus answered the Sadducees by declaring that marriage is only for the children of this world. In the resurrection of the dead, people do not marry or are given in marriage. On the contrary, those who raise from the dead are like angels and children of light.

In order to prove how the Sadducees were wrong and the resurrection was true, Jesus referred to Moses who, at the revelation of burning bush, called God as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, recognizing thereby that he is the God of the living and not of the dead, because in him all are alive.

What do we learn from this Gospel? Today I want to talk about the hope in the resurrection of the dead. The resurrection from the dead is the key teaching of our faith in Jesus Christ and the reason of our hope in eternal life. In fact, we act as we do, as

Christians, because we hold a strong conviction that by the end of this journey, God will allow us to have a place in his kingdom and to share in his divine life.

This message of resurrection is not based on an illusion or a given dream we have or a simple wish of things we want to happen to us at the end of this life. No; it is based on an event that occurred in this world, which is historical and to which people can refer to as authentic, namely the resurrection of Jesus. As St Paul says, if Jesus did not raise from the dead, our faith would be in vain and we would hold God as a liar by pretending that he raised Jesus. And yet, it is true that Jesus rose from the dead (I Cor. 15: 12-19).

What is the consequence of such an affirmation? The consequence is that because Jesus is risen, we too will share in his resurrection. What happened to him will happen also to us, because God will raise us with him. His resurrection is the model of our own resurrection from the dead. What God did with Jesus, he will do also with us.

Because resurrection means participation in the life of God, it cannot be compared to the life of this world with its human passions, emotions and desires like marrying or getting married. It is something completely different, an eternal happiness where the fact of contemplating God face to face fulfills every human longing that pushes us here on earth to have passion, emotion and desires. That is why in God's presence, there is no more pain, no more suffering, no more tears, no more marriage and all those small things that make us feel the burden of this world.

Because of the hope we have in us for the resurrection from the dead, we have to live prudently in this world with eyes fixed where Jesus is already. We have to walk with Jesus hand in hand until the last minute of our life, knowing that if we die with him, we will live with him.

Faith in the resurrection sheds light on everything we do in this world. It gives us the courage to support pains, sufferings and contradictions of the present life, because we firmly believe that things will be different. The hope of the resurrection changes our whole way of looking at human existence and the problems of this world. It is not a question of despising this world as though it were meaningless, but rather of using it as a ground field where we practice God's ways of living in preparation of the resurrection to come.

While we are still on earth, we have to prepare ourselves for the resurrection by our life of prayer. As St Paul says, 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 pray 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!

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



Homily Date: November 10, 2013
© 2013 – Fr Felicien I. Mbala, PhD, STD
Contact: www.mbala.org
Document Name: 20131110homily.pdf