

Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time C/2019

The readings of this Sunday talk about the resurrection of the body. They show that the resurrection of the dead is the foundation of our faith in God. They invite us to entrust faithfully our lives to God so that one day we may share in his kingdom in heaven.

The first reading describes the tragedy of the martyrdom of seven brothers. It shows how they were forced to violate the Law of Moses by eating the meat of pork, but they refused and remained faithful to God. It also shows that they accepted to die because they were convinced that God would raise them from the dead.

What is behind this text is the idea that suffering and torment cannot deter the faith of those who put their trust in God. There is also the idea that eternal life is more important than terrestrial life. The last idea is related to the truth that the resurrection of the dead is the foundation of our faith in God.

This text helps understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as Jesus is defending the reality of the resurrection of the dead from his detractors. First of all, the Gospel says that the Sadducees, who deny that there is resurrection for the dead, came to Jesus in order to set a trap for him. Then, it reports the question they asked him about a woman who died after having married seven brothers, as to whom she would belong at the resurrection of the dead.

After that, it gives the answer of Jesus declaring that marriage is only for people who are on earth and not for those who inherit eternal life. It also highlights the words of Jesus confirming that those who rise from the dead are like angels and children of God who can no longer die. The Gospel ends up with Jesus' statement that God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive.

What do we learn from today's Gospel? Today I want to talk about the reality of the resurrection of the body. In order to let you understand what I mean by that, I want first to tell you a story. In fact, a couple of years ago, in one of the Parishes I was, a gentleman who was a Mormon started the process of becoming catholic through the program of RCIA.

As RCIA continued, the moment came of accessing to the sacraments of initiation, namely Baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation. When his wife, who was still a practicing Mormon, heard the news, she could not stand the idea of the conversion of her husband to Catholicism. Among many other things, her main argument was that, if her husband becomes catholic, it means that she will not have him in heaven as husband.

To me, that was something unheard of, especially in the light of this chapter 20 of the Gospel of Luke, but that was her conviction. When I withdrew by myself, I thought a lot about what she was saying. In the end, I came to the conclusion that she was wrong to think so.

Why? Because it was like saying that eternal life, after death, is an extension of this terrestrial life with its passions, emotions and burning desires. Only such a vision could explain why it was important to her to hold to her husband in heaven and, eventually, continue to lead with him the kind of life they had on earth.

I believe that such a vision would make of God not only dangerous, but also irrelevant and unfair. For instance, suppose that here on earth someone was a slave, poor and miserable. If, after death his condition cannot be different or will remain the same, then, it serves no purpose to believe in God or to hope for a future bigger than what we have now.

Imagine also a husband or a wife who died of cancer that someone would meet over there with the same sickness or disease. That would be cruel and very difficult to bear. It would be like escaping a torrential rain in order to face a hurricane.

Moreover, it means that those who have sacrificed a lot of this life on earth for the sake of God's Kingdom would have done it in vain. That is why, I am convinced that Jesus was right to say that the children of this age marry and remarry, but at the resurrection of the dead they do not marry nor are they given in marriage. Because they do not die anymore, they are like angels.

Of course, as I presume, people will be recognized for who they were, but, as St Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15, they will have another body, incorruptible and immortal. Thus, someone who was buried corruptible will rise incorruptible. Whoever was buried dishonorable will rise glorious. The one who was buried weak will rise powerful. The one who was buried with a natural body will rise with a spiritual body, etc.

From this vision, let us draw some consequences: First, the resurrection is not the continuation of earthly life with its emotions and passions. It is a new life without end and without any shadow of things we live on earth. To say the contrary would be just a human projection.

Second, life in heaven will be different, because people will be different. Life in heaven will be something completely new, that is, a new life with God for an eternal happiness. That is why, for Jesus, there is no comparison between life on earth and the life of the resurrection we are hoping for.

Third, in the light of all this, death is not just a 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. It is for that reason that Jesus says that God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive.

Fourth, 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 know that things will be different. Faith in the resurrection changes our whole way of looking at human existence and the problems of this world.

Let us renew our faith in the resurrection from the dead, knowing well that one day God will give us the chance to stay with him in heaven and share in his life. May God bless you all!



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

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