

He is not God of the dead but of the living

Lectio Divina of Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time C

Opening Prayer: Heavenly Father, Thank you for this evening of Lectio Divina to read, meditate and pray your life-giving words for our spiritual nourishment. Holy Spirit, Prepare our heart to hear Your voice and be moved to action by it. Make us steadfast in prayer. Do not let our minds and hearts be deceived. Help us to be vigilant against the enemy's spiritual attacks on us. May we come closer to you day by day through prayer. Bring scripture to our mind that we may be filled with your wisdom. Make us realize that our life is short and your coming is certain. Let us be ready for your return at all times living consciously and consistently in your ways no matter when your Son would come to judge us. Lord, We don't know what future holds for us but we know for sure who holds our future. You hold our future. Hence may we hold on to you and lead a meaningful, spiritual and vigilant life. Amen

First Reading: A reading from the second book of Maccabees 7:1-2,9-14

It happened that seven brothers with their mother were arrested and tortured with whips and scourges by the king, to force them to eat pork in violation of God's law. One of the brothers, speaking for the others, said: "What do you expect to achieve by questioning us? We are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our ancestors." At the point of death he said: "You accursed fiend, you are depriving us of this present life, but the King of the world will raise us up to live again forever. It is for his laws that we are dying." After him the third suffered their cruel sport. He put out his tongue at once when told to do so, and bravely held out his hands, as he spoke these noble words: "It was from Heaven that I received these; for the sake of his laws I disdain them; from him I hope to receive them again." Even the king and his attendants marveled at the young man's courage, because he regarded his sufferings as nothing. After he had died, they tortured and maltreated the fourth brother in the same way. When he was near death, he said, "It is my choice to die at the hands of men with the hope God gives of being raised up by him; but for you, there will be no resurrection to life." (The word of the Lord/ Thanks be to God)

Commentary: The readings for the remaining Sundays in Ordinary Time will focus on life, death and resurrection of the human person not in a threatening way, but in a spirit of hope as we get closer to the season of Advent because they cause us to think about our eventual death and preparedness. 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. One says, "You may discharge us from this present life, but the King of the world will raise us up." Another says that he hopes to receive his severed limbs again in Heaven. The fourth son also says that he is "relying on God's promise that we shall be raised up by Him." Psalm 17

Responsorial psalm. Lord, when your glory appears, my joy will be full.

Hear, O LORD, a just suit; attend to my outcry;
hearken to my prayer from lips without deceit.

R. Lord, when your glory appears, my joy will be full.

My steps have been steadfast in your paths,
my feet have not faltered.
I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God;
incline your ear to me; hear my word.

R. Lord, when your glory appears, my joy will be full.

Keep me as the apple of your eye,
hide me in the shadow of your wings.
But I in justice shall behold your face;
on waking I shall be content in your presence.

R. Lord, when your glory appears, my joy will be full.

Second Reading: A reading from the second letter of St. Paul to the Thessalonians 2:16-3:5

Brothers and sisters: May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting encouragement and good hope through his grace, encourage your hearts and strengthen them in every good deed and word. Finally, brothers and sisters, pray for us, so that the word of the Lord may speed forward and be glorified, as it did among you, and that we may be delivered from perverse and wicked people, for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one. We are confident of you in the Lord that what we instruct you, you are doing and will continue to do. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the endurance of Christ. (The word of the Lord/ Thanks be to God)

Commentary: There was a rumor among the Thessalonians that the second coming of Christ has already occurred without their awareness and that the Lord did not take them into the Kingdom and thus they had a feeling that they will not have a share in his salvation. St. Paul in his response assures them that the Lord has not come and further tells them that they already have a taste of this salvation in this world. They should not be so focused upon the world to come, but live in this world as they await the coming of the Lord

Gospel Reading: A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke 20:27-38

Some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection, came forward and put this question to Jesus, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us, If someone's brother dies leaving a wife but no child, his brother must take the wife and raise up descendants for his brother. Now there were seven brothers; the first married a woman but died childless. Then the second and the third married her, and likewise all the seven died childless. Finally the woman also died. Now at the resurrection whose wife will that woman be? For all seven had been married to her." Jesus said to them, "The children of this age marry and remarry; but those who are deemed worthy to attain to the coming age and to the resurrection of the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. They can no longer die, for they are like angels; and they are the children of God because they are the ones who will rise. That the dead will rise even Moses made known in the passage about the bush, when he called out 'Lord, 'the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; and he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive.'"

Meditation: Resurrection is the essence of our christian faith and without resurrection, our christian life has no meaning. The month of November is very dear to all of us because we remember the deceased members of our families and pray for them throughout this month. It is also a reminder to reflect on the undeniable reality of death and what happens after death. Death is certain in every human life but we

don't know what happens after death. But for us Christians, this uncertainty is removed by resurrection. This is the theme of today's liturgy. Reflection on the reality of death leads to the reflection on the resurrection of the dead, which is the hope and basis of our Christian journey. In the creed, we at last profess that we believe in the resurrection of the body. Today's gospel helps us to reflect more on the dogma of our Catholic Church. We are living in the world of scientific advancement. Our spiritual beliefs are losing grounds in the minds and hearts of even the Christians. The last weeks of every liturgical year invite us to reflect on the dogmatic truths about life, death, resurrection and the second coming of Christ.

Reflection on the gospel. There were two sections of people living during Jesus' time having different understanding on the teaching of Resurrection. They are namely the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees believed in the resurrection. The Sadducees did not believe in it. How do we understand the resurrection? It is a belief which says that our God is God of the living and not of the dead. This belief is in perfect coherence with the teaching of the scripture. Jesus addresses God as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Of course Abraham, Issac and Jacob have dead and gone, but still they live in God's abode and therefore God is addressed in relation to them. God has created us for earthly life now which is perishable and also for an eternal life which is imperishable.

Resurrection of Jesus is the very foundation of Christianity. If there is no resurrection of Jesus Christ as a historical event, then there is no Christianity in this world. St Paul says, "But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain... But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1Cor 15:12-14, 20). In the first reading, we note the seven brothers were ready to die for they believed in the resurrection. At the point of death due to the torture by the Greeks, the fourth among the seven brothers cried out, "I would rather die at the hands of men, and wait for the promises of God who will raise us up; you, however, shall have no part in the resurrection of life." (2Mac 7:14)

What is the meaning of the resurrection of the body that we profess? Tertullian, one of the theologians during the early Church says, "The flesh is the hinge of salvation." It means: we believe in God who is creator of the flesh; we believe in the Word made flesh i.e. Jesus Christ took flesh in order to redeem the flesh; therefore we believe in the resurrection of the flesh, the fulfillment of both the creation and the redemption of the flesh. By death the soul is separated from the body, but in the resurrection God will give incorruptible life to our subtle body, transformed by reunion with our soul. Just as Christ is risen and lives forever, so all of us will rise at the last day. Let us thank God for revealing to us the mystery of the resurrection. Let us reaffirm our belief in the life of the world to come, so that we may gain hope after hope in the person of our Lord who rose from the dead and lives as the Lord of lords and King of kings.

Concluding Prayer: Lord, the resurrection of Your Son has given us new life and renewed hope. Help us to live as new people in pursuit of the Christian ideal. Grant us wisdom to know what we must do, the will to want to do it, the courage to undertake it, the perseverance to continue to do it, and the strength to complete it. We confess our need for you... We ask that you renew our hearts, minds, and lives, for the days ahead. May our lives serve as signs of the transforming power of Your love