

32<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME, C  
IN SACRIFICE IS THE RESURRECTION TO LIFE

*“He is God of the living not of the dead, for to Him all are alive” (Lk. 20: 38)*

***The Resurrection as a Controversial Subject:*** As we move towards the end of the liturgical season, the Church invites us to contemplate the Last Things. On this Thirty-second Sunday, our focus is on the Resurrection of the dead. The Resurrection has always been a controversial subject before and even after the Resurrection of Christ. While Christianity, Islam and Judaism believe in it, the Eastern religions have no place for its consideration. Ancient Greek philosophy regarded the body as the prison of the soul and therefore, did not consider bodily resurrection as a serious subject matter. Today secularism and advancement in technology have led some to think less of this mystery of serious importance among the Christians, who, following the teachings of Jesus Christ, have it as the foundation of their faith. St. Paul enunciates this teaching very profoundly: “If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is empty, and your faith comes to nothing ... If it is only in this life that we hope in Christ; we are the most unfortunate of all people” (1 Cor 15: 13-14, 19).

***Eternal Life is a Choice:*** The First Reading (2 Macc. 7: 1-2, 9-14) presents a heroic but heartrending story of the martyrdom of seven brothers. This pre-Christian family stood up against a treacherous, egotist Greek king, Antiochus IV, who wanted to Hellenise the Jews by ridiculing their religion, forcing them to eat pork, which was a forbidden meat in their religion. The boys, encouraged by their brave and faithful mother, remained resilient and freely chose to suffer excruciating death instead of violating the teaching of their religion as God’s chosen people. At the heart of their choice was their faith in God and believe in the resurrection of the body; “We are prepared to die right now rather than break the laws of God ... but the King of the world will raise us up. He will give us eternal life since we die for His laws ... I would rather die in the hands of men, and wait for the promises of God who will raise us up ... (vv. 2, 9, 14). The take from this account is that eternal life is a choice we must make consciously. Sometimes, the choice can be hard, a very hard one. As Christians we must be prepared to walk the path of Christ, Who accepted the shameful martyrdom of the Cross to win us eternal life. Christianity without the willingness to suffer for the love of Christ is a journey without a purpose.

***Christ and the Sadducees:*** There is need for us to understand a little about this sect of Jews called the Sadducees. This group of Jewish people included the leading priests and the high priest himself. They were from the royal stock of the house of King David. They were the most advantaged in the society: most educated, the wealthiest and therefore, they were the aristocrats of the society. It was one of their religious roles to maintain the Temple in Jerusalem. All these aroused in them a sense of self-conceited arrogance. They were very knowledgeable with the Torah and rejected all the Books of Old testament except the first-five Books – the Pentateuch. They did not believe in spirits, angels, and the resurrection of the body. It is no wonder then why they confronted Jesus with the arguments purported to ridicule His teaching on resurrection. Basing their argument on the law of levirate marriage, as taught by Moses (Deut. 25: 5-6), they adapted the story in Tobit (3: 8-9, 15) – seven brothers successively married a widow of the first and each died without a child, and later the woman died. Then they asked: “Now at the resurrection, whose wife shall she be? For she has been married to all seven” (v. 33). Jesus’ response came in two parts.

***The Resurrected Are Like Angels:*** In the first part of Jesus’ response, he stated that in the afterlife, the resurrected no longer die. And therefore, there is no need for them to marry because neither does one’s family lineage need further procreation nor his name need to be preserved. The purpose of the levirate law of marriage, besides care for the widow, was so that the name of the deceased would continue through a descendant (Deut. 25: 6). Jesus turned the attention of the Sadducees, who were materially and earthly focused, to the fact that the standards of the risen life are not like what obtains here: “The children of this age marry and remarry; but those who are deemed worthy to attain the coming age and to the resurrection of the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage” (vv. 34-35). He poked them a bit by saying: “They are like angels and cannot die anymore. They are children of God because God has raised them from the dead” (V. 36). We too must not think of heaven in purely earthly or human terms. We must strive to be “children of God” for such as these belong the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 19: 14; Lk. 18: 16).

***God is of the Living, Not of the Dead:*** The second part of Jesus’ response is even more interesting because He used the portion of the Torah (Exodus 3), which they believed; and used the experience of the Patriarch Moses, who was their accepted leader and model to debunk their argument. Referring to the encounter at the Burning Bush, Jesus pointed out that the resurrection of the

dead was at the heart of the Pentateuch and averred that even Moses believed in the resurrection of the dead when the Lord revealed Himself to Moses as “God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob” (Ex. 3: 6; Lk. 20: 37). Though these patriarchs died centuries before, they were living in the sight of God. It is impossible that God, who is the Source of all life and all living could identify Himself with three dead men, if they were not still alive.

***My dear friends,*** what question would you ask Jesus, if He were to offer you the privilege to do so? And why? Let us encourage one another relying on the grace of God to strengthen us in every good deed as we work in hope for our resurrection on the Last Day. I pray, with St. Paul in the Second Reading (Thess. 2: 16-3:5): “May the 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 and guard you from the evil one” (vv. 16, 3: 3).