

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C

Let us begin prayer,

in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

As the end of the year approaches,
the natural world reminds us

that our lives are only a passing season.

O God, You alone offer us the hope of an eternal life
in which death has no permanent sting.

Be with us, O Lord of the living.

Stretch us open with Your life-giving breath.

Flood us with your love so that we overflow with your boundless life.

Open us to Your Word which speaks of your eternal friendship with us.

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

O Lord, I call upon You, for You will answer me,
You are the savior of those who seek refuge.

Keep me as the *apple of Your eye*.

Hide me in the shadow of Your wings.

Save me from people whose only concern is with this world.

May my treasure be more than just what can fill my belly.

As I walk in justice, I believe that I will behold Your face,

Lord, when your glory appears, my joy will be full. (Psalm 17)

A Reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke(20: 27-38).

Glory to You, O Lord.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You , Lord Jesus Christ.

What do you see in this story? What do you find hopeful? – difficult?

What do you see as Jesus' main idea?

Jesus is talking of resurrection in the very city where he will suffer and die.

What do you think about this?

Jesus is finally in Jerusalem:
in Luke 19: 29+, he entered the city on a donkey.
In verses 41+, he weeps over Jerusalem
because they will not recognize the “things that make for peace.”
He enters the Temple and ‘cleanses’ it,
calling it a House of Prayer not a den of thieves.
Needless to say, the chief priests and leaders of the people were plotting to
‘trap’ him . . . After much controversy, we then have this reading.

THE SADDUCEES, mostly priests, were the wealthy aristocracy of the day. They were the privileged presiders of temple ritual and sacrifices. They did not believe in the resurrection of the dead (a much debated subject at Jesus’ time). The Pharisees, mostly laymen, on the other hand, did believe in resurrection. The Sadducees, as an elite class, also enjoyed *a very cooperative and profitable relationship with Rome*.

Jesus was part of a culture that was prone to conflict because of its emphasis on honor. To gain and augment personal honor, one must challenge another in hope that the challenged person will look weak. Jesus may not have started the argument, but he is not against putting the opponents on the defensive and letting them look ‘stupid’ in comparison with his own clear thinking. One can see how such confrontation eventually could lead to their wanting to get rid of him. *Yet, Jesus speaks what he knows to be true, not letting fear rule him.*

(The Cultural World of Jesus, John Pilch, 161-163)

Edward Hays, a priest and poet, suggests that it is healthy for us to live daily attune to the mystery of death – and life. To live without ‘dealing with death’ can be living a life of denial and hidden fear. Both *life and death – holy twins – reside in each of us*. Both can teach us if we are willing to learn with God’s help. Death can help us realize the urgency of growing our spirits larger by acts of love. Death will also help us not to take for granted those we love. We should not miss the countless opportunities we have to live and love well. Suffering and death pale in comparison to the fullness of life to come. This is the Paschal Mystery that Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection assures us *is real*.

Our Christian hope does not depend upon wishful thinking; it depends upon *the very nature of God*. That is the point the Jesus is making here. God has showed us in the biblical experience that God is essentially a God of the living. God enters into a personal relationship with human beings, and that relationship – because it is with a God of life – cannot be destroyed – not even by death. As Paul assures us, “Neither death nor life . . . will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8: 39)

Remember how the devil quotes scripture to Jesus in the temptations in the desert? So, too, these Sadducees are also misusing Scripture to trap and gain power over Jesus. *When do you find Scripture life-giving? When is it used to harm?*

From Larry Gillick, S.J.:

This passage may seem contradictory to other Scripture passages and to the sacramental sanctity of marriage. Yet, Jesus is speaking more clearly here about the life to come and the life that leads there. Being married or single is not the question. All human beings are invited to live on this earth without making answers, ideas, other persons, things, any relationship into ultimates or gods. Married and unmarried, all humans, long for completion so deeply that we all can drift toward grasping greedily any one or any thing which will do as a substitute. What Jesus is saying is that this present life leads to the beyond and not to itself. *Married or single we all reveal to each other just how much we are not gods.* We need to invite ourselves and everyone else to continue to grow in life toward the real completion that is God. Our problem is that usually all we want is the final completion of the here-after to be experienced in the here-before! (<http://www.creaighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/111107.html>)

1st Reading -- 2 Maccabees 7: 1-2, 9-14

This book tells of the gruesome atrocities endured by the Jews under the Greek leader, Antiochus Epiphanes about 150 BC. He is noted for the “*abomination of desolation*” in which he had pigs sacrificed in the Temple’s Holy of Holies to the Greek god, Zeus. The purpose of this book is to edify its readers in their Jewish faith, recalling for them the beautiful examples given by those who defended the cause of God. It places great hope in the rewards that await those who suffer for their faith. *The death of martyrs can bring salvation to others.* It is believed that it is out of such suffering that a firm belief in resurrection began to grow in the Jewish faith. (*Celebration*, Nov.2001)

Why would suffering and persecution give rise to such beliefs?

Thoughts to consider:

**A belief in resurrection can free us
from the crushing power of oppression and persecution.**

“The blood of martyrs is the seed of faith.” Tertullian, 145-230AD

Are there things worth dying for?

What makes a ‘good death’? What makes a ‘good life’?

How does this reading prepare us for the gospel?

From Larry Gillick, S.J.:

This reading is not really about keeping the strictness of law, no matter what. The ‘law’ that God had given the Jewish people was to be an expression of how God desired the people to resist being dominated by inner-laws of selfishness and the outer-laws of other nations. These brothers and their mother were not legalistic fanatics fearful of punishment, but faithful Jews who loved God firstly and their own lives secondly. They are killed because they believe in the God of life who will raise them to a higher life. They declare themselves free of the domination of a dictator.

(<http://www.creaighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/111107.html>)

2nd Reading -- 2 Thessalonians 2: 16 – 3: 5

This is probably a letter written by an unknown author in the name of Paul sometime after his death. The writer wants to interpret Paul’s ideas for a new time. It is written to a severely persecuted community (1:4-7).

It warns against the ‘lawless one,’ an ‘antichrist,’ a false prophet. These people were suffering *and yet Jesus had not returned in glory.*

How do these words of faith in the midst of difficulty speak to you?

What does this add to the other readings?

How can we live our belief in eternal life?

Where do you find signs, hints, hope of resurrection?

How does this belief affect your everyday life?

An ending thought from Fr. Ronald Rolheiser:

For many people resurrection is sort of a metaphor for the transformation that positive thinking can bring– sort of like the idea that with positive thinking we can ‘heal’ ourselves. *But resurrection is so much more than that.*

It is about the power of God, miraculous energy, energy that can do for us what we cannot do for ourselves – or for our loved ones. It is the God-energy that can do for us what even nature cannot do. Resurrection does not deny the importance of positive thinking and appropriate will-power. But it is much more than that. Ultimately, it is about the transcendent power of God breaking into nature and into our lives and *doing for us what we can’t do* simply through will-power and positive thinking. It is a power that can rearrange the very atoms inside of our physical bodies, our aching emotions, and our divided world and raise up new life from the ashes.

(http://liturgy.slu.edu/32OrdC110710/reflections_rolheiser.html)

Let us pray:

**We thank you, O Lord, for all those who have gone before us
into the fullness of Your presence and love –
and for all those who still journey with us here in this life.**

**We thank you for all those who gave us life and nurtured us:
mothers, fathers and grandparents.**

**We thank you for all who have enriched our family life:
brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins.**

**We thank you for all those to whom we were privileged
to give life and to nurture in some way:
children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews,
students and learners of all kinds.**

**We thank you for those who have journeyed with us
and gifted our lives in special and diverse ways:
wives, husbands, friends, teachers, mentors, and neighbors.**

**We thank you, Lord, for this wondrous *Communion of Saints*
who have helped us to experience your love in so many ways.**

**O God of life and journey,
show us how you have been with us in all our comings and goings.
We place our lives and the lives of all those we love into your welcoming arms.**

Come home to us Lord.

Dwell in our everyday.

May your powerful presence run like a thread through the fibers of our being.

Amen.

Other prayers to ponder and share:

**Jesus,
allow your gracious promise
of the resurrection
to help us to
bear all things, believe all things,
endure all things, hope all things.
For love never ends.
Amen.**

Let us pray:

**O Great Spirit,
Whose voice I hear in the winds,
and Whose Breath gives life to all – hear me!
I am small and weak;
I need your wisdom and strength.**

**Let me walk in beauty
as my eyes behold the red and purple sunset.
Make my hands respect all that you have made.
Make me wise so that I can hear your Word and live it.
Let me learn all that You have hidden in every leaf and rock.
I seek strength, not to be greater than others,
but to fight my greatest enemy – myself.
Make me ready to come to You
with clean hands and straight eyes.
When life fades, as the fading sunset,
Let my spirit come to You in love and without shame.
Amen.**

(From an old Indian Prayer)