

32nd Sunday of the Year C

The Lord is faithful, and he will give you strength and guard you from the evil one. (2 Th 3:3)



First Reading

2 Maccabees 7:1-2.9-14

There were seven brothers who were arrested with their mother. The king tried to force them to taste pig's flesh, which the Law forbids, by torturing them with whips and scourges. One of them, acting as spokesman for the others, said, "What are you trying to find out from us? We are prepared to die rather than break the Law of our ancestors."

With his last breath the second brother exclaimed, "Inhuman fiend, you may discharge us from this present life, but the King of the world will raise us up, since it is for his laws that we die, to live again for ever."

After him, they amused themselves with the third, who on being asked for his tongue promptly thrust it out and boldly held out his hands, with these honourable words, "It was heaven that gave me these limbs; for the sake of his laws I disdain them; from him I hope to receive them again." The king and his attendants were astounded at the young man's courage and his utter indifference to suffering.

When this one was dead they subjected the fourth to the same savage torture. When he neared his end he cried, "Ours is the better choice, to meet death at men's hands, yet relying on God's promise that we shall be raised up by him; whereas for you there can be no resurrection, no new life."

Second Reading

2 Thessalonians 2:16 – 3:5

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father who has given us his love and, through his grace, such inexhaustible comfort and such sure hope, comfort you and strengthen you in everything good that you do or say.

Finally, brothers and sisters, pray for us; pray that the Lord's message may spread quickly, and be received with honour as it was among you; and pray

that we may be preserved from the interference of bigoted and evil people, for faith is not given to everyone. But the Lord is faithful, and he will give you strength and guard you from the evil one, and we, in the Lord, have every confidence that you are doing and will go on doing all that we tell you. May the Lord turn your hearts towards the love of God and the fortitude of Christ.

Gospel

Luke 20:27.34-38

Some Sadducees – those who say that there is no resurrection – approached Jesus and they put this question to him.

Jesus replied, "The children of this world take wives and husbands, but those who are judged worthy of a place in the other world and in the resurrection from the dead do not marry because they can no longer die, for they are the same as the angels, and being children of the resurrection they are children of God. And Moses himself implies that the dead rise again, in the passage about the bush where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Now he is God, not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all men are in fact alive."

Meditation

Haunted by the tragic and revolting character of death, our society devotes a great deal of speculation to life after death. This contemporary discussion recalls the debate between the Sadducees and Pharisees of Jesus' time. One party to such controversy, the Sadducees, brought Jesus into the debate.

Opportunists in politics, conservatives in religion, these Sadducees had held to the ancient conception of a dim survival of souls in a problematic "sheol". They dismissed the idea of the resurrection of the dead, articulated well after Moses, as useless innovation. In this spirit they propose to Jesus one of those bizarre cases dear to casuists of every age. Basing themselves on the levirate law, which required a man to marry the childless widow of his brother, they complicate things to the extreme in order to ridicule the theory they reject. Jesus takes the question to a higher level. In the new world of the resurrection, it will no longer be necessary to marry and reproduce in order to survive. Our experience of God is not restricted to the brief and passing time of a human life. Those who know the presence of God within the limits of a corruptible existence are drawn to hope that they will remain in that presence forever.

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Gospel

Luke 20:27-38

Some Sadducees – those who say that there is no resurrection – approached Jesus and they put this question to him.

"Master, we have it from Moses in writing, that if a man's married brother dies childless, the man must marry the widow to raise up children for his brother. Well, then, there were seven brothers. The first, having married a wife, died childless. The second and then the third married the widow. And the same with all seven, they died leaving no children. Finally the woman herself died. Now, at the resurrection, to which of them will she be wife since she had been married to all seven?"

Jesus replied, "The children of this world take wives and husbands, but those who are judged worthy of a place in the other world and in the resurrection from the dead do not marry because they can no longer die, for they are the same as the angels, and being children of the resurrection they are children of God. And Moses himself implies that the dead rise again, in the passage about the bush where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Now he is God, not of the dead, but of the living; for to him all men are in fact alive."

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