

November 6, 2022 - 32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time  
Life after Death as a Christian Response to the God of Living  
Gospel of Luke 20:27-38  
Fr. Oliver

A grown man, half-jokingly, half in earnest, explains his fear of flying: "Suppose the plane blows up in the air and I am blown to pieces. At the resurrection of the body, God will certainly find it difficult to assemble all my shattered pieces. I'd rather die as one piece so I will be among the first to raise whole from the dead." Tough questions these, as tough as the situation the Sadducees present to Jesus in today's gospel.

As we near the end of the Church's liturgical year, the readings become more eschatological — having to do with the end times. The main theme of today's readings is the reality of life after death and of the relationship between our lives on earth and the life of glory or punishment that will follow. The readings invite us to consider the true meaning of the Resurrection in our lives. The first reading states the first century BC Jewish theology of martyrdom and the resurrection of the just. The intense sufferings to which good Jews were subjected brought them to the conviction that the justice of God would reward the faithful in the afterlife and would also punish the wicked.

The second reading was meant to encourage the Thessalonians who were waiting for the Parousia (the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead), to trust in the fidelity of God. It was also meant to open their eyes to the fact that the Lord would strengthen their hearts in every good work and word.

The same theme, the resurrection of the dead, is the basis of the confrontation described in today's Gospel passage. Today's Gospel affirms the victory of God and God's love over the power of death. Jesus speaks of God as the God of the living, who promises that the ones who will rise to life in Heaven are God's children. The Gospel shows us how Jesus ingeniously escaped from a doctrinal trap set for him and explained the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead which was supported by the Pharisees but denied by the Sadducees. Jesus also explains that heavenly life with God in glory is totally different from earthly life, and that there is no marriage in Heaven in the earthly sense.

I'm sure each one of us believes in the resurrection. That everybody will be resurrected at the end of our lives on this earth that is why we are here attending this Mass. If there is no hope for resurrection, there is no need for us to do good towards our neighbour, to love and to serve them. If there is no hope for resurrection, there is no need for us to sacrifice and offer our lives for the sake of other people. If there is no resurrection, there is no need for us to pray, to go to Mass on Sundays, to work for peace and justice, to join in all religious activities of our church, to receive sacraments and many more. Jesus makes it clear that the resurrection is not simply a continuation of earthly life. He speaks of resurrection not of everyone but only of "those judged worthy of a place in the age to come."

During Vatican I era, the Church did not allow dead bodies to be cremated but the dead body should be buried in the cemetery. It is because we do believe that it is the same body we have in afterlife, but above all we respect the human body since it is where God dwells. So, if we do believe in the afterlife or in the resurrection of the dead, we should do the following.

Be sure to have a citizenship in heaven. To become citizens rather than aliens or foreigners in the kingdom of God is our main goal in this life.

There was story about a rich and famous man who died and arrived at the gates of heaven. "What have you done that entitles you to admission in heaven?" asked St. Peter. "I once gave a needy beggar one dollar," answered this man.

"Is that correct, Angel Gabriel?" inquired St. Peter. "Yes, St. Peter," said the angel. St. Peter continued: "What else have you done?" "Well, I once gave a newspaper boy, two dollars," said the man.

"That's on the record," said the angel again. "And what else have you done to your credit?" asked St. Peter. "That's all I can remember," said the man.

"Angel Gabriel, what shall we do with this man," St. Peter asked. "St. Peter, give him back his three dollars and tell him to go to hell!" said the angel.

Thus as a conclusion, we need to remember the following:

- 1) **We need to live as people of the Resurrection:** This means that we are not to lie buried in the tomb of our sins and evil habits. Instead, we are to live joyful and peaceful lives, constantly experiencing the real Presence of the Risen Lord who gives us the assurance that our bodies also will be raised. In addition, the hope of our resurrection and eternal life with God gives us lasting peace and celestial joy amid the boredom and tension of our day-to-day lives.
- 2) **We need to offer living worship to a living God.** The reason we come together each week to pray for the needs of the community, share the Word and break the Bread is that we have Faith and Hope in a living God Who loves us and Whom we love. If God is the God of the living, should not worship of this God also be alive?

Our worship services and relation to God must be life-giving rather than life-draining experiences. Unfortunately, Holy Mass and other worship services are often described as "dead" or "boring." Even Church volunteers sometimes complain of being exhausted in their work. The proclamation that our God is the God of the living has to mean something positive to us. It should affect our lives today and every day, especially during our Sunday worship. In response to Him, our participation in prayers and songs during the Holy Mass should be active and our behaviour in Church reverent, though not gloomy.

As we continue our Eucharist celebration and gather around the Table of the Lord, let us give thanks to Almighty God for this foretaste of the Heavenly Banquet that awaits us in the place that God has prepared for us.