

Alleluia, alleluia!

Jesus Christ is the firstborn of the dead;
glory and kingship be his for ever and ever.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Lk 20:27-38

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

He is not a God of the dead but of the living.

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 the 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 sons 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 are in fact alive.’

■ The Gospel of the Lord.

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Reflections on the Gospel

GOD IS A GOD OF LIFE

In today’s Gospel, Jesus is challenged by some Sadducees, a Jewish sect one of whose key tenets is the denial of resurrection. The quibble they employ to make belief in resurrection ridiculous stems from the prescription of the Mosaic Law by which a man is required to raise up offspring for a brother who dies childless (Deut 25:5-6). The quibble rests upon a crass assumption that life after death is simply an extension of life in the present time.

In his response, Jesus clarifies the matter. Firstly, in the case of the risen life, we are dealing with a totally new situation. Those who share in it enjoy immunity to death. Since they die no more, there is no need for procreation—nor, correspondingly, for marriage, the institution designed to supply it.

Secondly, the Sadducees’ quibble trivialises both the nature of God and human relationship with God. The God who appeared to Moses at the burning bush (see Exod 3:6), did not say ‘I *was* the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob’ but ‘I *am* the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob’. The description not only evokes God’s eternal being but implies the *continuing* personal existence of those with whom God remains in relationship.

Denial of the resurrection is denial of the nature of God as Israel—and the whole tradition deriving from Israel’s faith—conceives God to be.

The Gospel does not offer a theology of marriage. It makes a statement about God and the hope for sharing Christ’s risen life that relationship with God entails.

Brendan Byrne, SJ

THE SAVING WORD

THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME / C

10 NOVEMBER 2019

FIRST READING

2 Macc 7:1-2, 9-14

A reading from the second book of Maccabees
The king of the world will receive us into life eternal at the resurrection.

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.

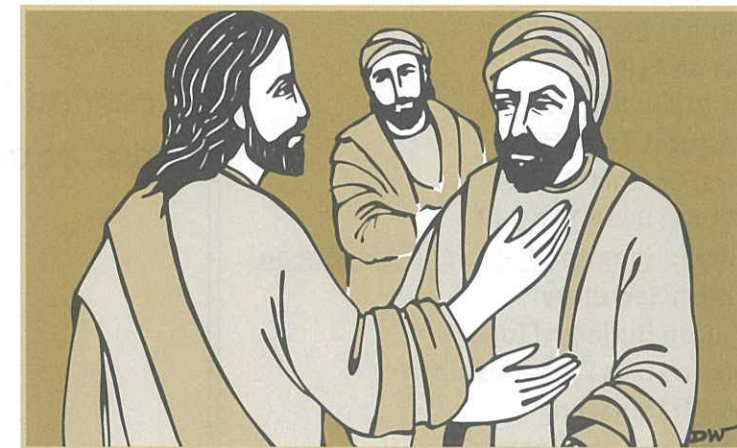
When this one was dead they subjected the fourth to the same savage torture. When he neared his end he cried, ‘Ours is the better choice, to meet death at men’s hands, yet relying on God’s promise that we shall be raised up by him; whereas for you there can be no resurrection, no new life.’

■ The word of the Lord.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Ps 16:1, 5-6, 8, 15. R. v. 15

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

1. Lord, hear a cause that is just, / pay heed to my cry. / Turn your ear to my prayer: / no deceit is on my lips. **R.**



2. I kept my feet firmly in your paths; / there was no faltering in my steps. / I am here and I call, you will hear me, O God. / Turn your ear to me; hear my words. **R.**

3. Guard me as the apple of your eye. / Hide me in the shadow of your wings. / As for me, in my justice I shall see your face / and be filled, when I awake, with the sight of your glory. **R.**

SECOND READING

2 Thess 2:16-3:5

A reading from the second letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians

May the Lord strengthen you in everything good that you do or say.

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, 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.

■ The word of the Lord.