

Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C

The new liturgical year starts December 1, the first Sunday of Advent. As we leave Cycle C and the year of the Gospel writer, Luke, these last few weeks focus on the last things and the hope of the resurrection and eternal life with Jesus.

In the month of November, our mortality is placed before us, literally, as we display the books of our deceased relatives, and we contemplate our own hope for the life of the world to come.

For us Christians, the word hope does not mean that we wish for something, like “hoping” to win the lottery. With faith in Jesus, **our** hope is the absolute belief that what He tells us is the truth.

We are resurrection people who will share eternal life.

Our first reading from 2Maccabees stresses the doctrine of the resurrection of the just. Though this earthly king is depriving the brothers of their present life, they have the hope that the King of the world will raise them up to eternal life.

Not only that, the third brother professes the hope that God will also restore his body at the Resurrection.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church confirms all this. In addition, it adds that our hope is in the person of Jesus Himself who said, “I am the Resurrection and the Life”. The Catechism states that, “It is Jesus Himself who on the last day will raise up those who have believed in Him, who have eaten His Body and drunk His Blood”.

We profess this belief in the Creed every Sunday at Mass – “I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.”

In our Gospel reading, Jesus has finally completed His journey to Jerusalem. There He encounters the Sadducees, who do not believe in the Resurrection, but believe that living a just life is more for the benefit of our descendants. The Sadducees, unlike the Pharisees, believed only in the written Scriptures, particularly the Torah – the first five books of the Bible – and did not accept oral tradition.

With their complex story about the seven brothers who marry the same woman, Jesus recognizes the Sadducees’ attempt to ridicule the Resurrection. He takes the opportunity to make a distinction between how we live in the midst of human history and how things will be in the next life.

Although we cannot know exactly what our life in heaven will be, Jesus does give us a few clues in the Gospels. Today He is teaching us that for people reborn in the Resurrection, life and relationships are comparable to that of angels – our lives will not be a continuation of our material lives on earth.

Furthermore, we also cannot view the Resurrection in temporal terms as something that will happen in the future. The life of the world to come exists now, as we pray for those who have gone before us. Jesus tells us today that God “is not God of the dead, but of the living, for to Him all are alive”.

We have great cause for hope. The one who has risen from the dead has given us His word – that He is the God of the living, that when we awake from the sleep of death, we will behold His face and be content in the presence of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

We can only imagine the incredible peace when that moment comes.

But we can a glimpse of it now. If you've been to a Catholic funeral, you know what I mean. It is not uncommon for the words of that Mass to lead someone to our faith, to share the hope we have for eternal life.

In every Mass, we profess our hope to one day share in the heavenly banquet.

The greatest fear most of us have is death. But by professing and living the words of Jesus and trusting in the life He offers; we can live here and now in the light of the Resurrection. If we are willing to give ourselves to Jesus, even in the details of our life, He will change our hearts and give us the courage to confront whatever comes in this life, so that we will be ready to rise with Him in the next.