



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C

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"...they are like angels and are children of God, being children of the resurrection" Luke 20:36

The Sadducees are less well known than the Pharisees. They were the party of the priestly class. They were fundamentalists in their interpretation of the law and based their rejection of the idea of resurrection in the mere pragmatic fact that it is not mentioned in the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. Pragmatic tunnel vision is the trap we all at some time or another fall prey to.

The question they pose to Jesus is based on what is called the "*levirate marriage law*." If a man died without heirs, his brother was expected to marry the widow and raise children who would carry the deceased man's name. The necessary perpetuation of the family for the sake of the stability of the earthly Community was the purpose of this law. This is necessary but it is not enough. Jesus takes us deeper into His teachings on the mystical Body.

While the exaggerated case that the Sadducees propose to Jesus is hardly probable, they make their point. Their point, of course, is not about marriage but about *resuscitation* from the dead not *resurrection*. Resuscitation is a mere return to life in mortal form such as Lazarus experienced (see John 11:43), while resurrection is an entirely new form of mystical life. This is the issue Jesus addresses. Jesus' response challenges their assumption that resurrected life is simply a continuation of earthly life. He insists rather that it is a new existence freed from the limitations of this life.

Jesus then adds another argument to support belief in the resurrection of the dead. Since God is known as the *God of the living* and as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, then these patriarchs must be alive in God. *They are living in God* even though their earthly bodies have died.

We tend to assume that all Christians believe in the resurrection of the dead, but recent surveys suggest that a significant number are unsure about it. This reading speaks directly to such doubts, affirming Christ's teaching of the resurrection. This tenet is at the heart of our faith. As we rise in contemplative prayer we are illuminated with the wisdom of Moses and the revelation of a heavenly life where we dwell in the perfection of our personhood, through grace, with the three Persons of the Trinity, God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Through the grace of illumination we see that God always is and always will be, and those who are with God live in the joyful ecstasy of eternal life. For reflection we need look no further than our second reading from Thessalonians 2:13-14:

"God chose you from the beginning to be saved through sanctification by the Spirit and through belief in the truth. It was for this purpose that he called you through our gospel so that you might come to eternally share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Reflect on this teaching that it might allay any doubts about our own resurrection. The Lord is faithful and will guard us always. He is God of the living.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

Some Sadducees,
those who say there is no resurrection,
came to Jesus and asked him a question,

*"Teacher,
Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies,
leaving a wife but no children,
the man shall marry the widow
and raise up children for his brother.
Now there were seven brothers;
the first married, and died childless;
then the second
and the third married her,
and so in the same way all seven died childless.
Finally the woman also died.
In the resurrection, therefore,
whose wife will the woman be
- for the seven had married her."*

Jesus said to them,

*"Those who belong to this age marry and are given in marriage;
but those who are considered worthy of a place in that age
and in the resurrection from the dead
neither marry nor are given in marriage.
Indeed they cannot die any more,
because they are like angels and are children of God,
being children of the resurrection."*

*"And the fact that the dead are raised
Moses himself showed in the story about the bush,
where he speaks of the Lord as 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 of them are alive. "*

The Gospel of the Lord

