

- In our Gospel today, the Sadducees present Jesus with a question which the Pharisees never could quite answer, and so the Sadducees—who, because they did not believe in the resurrection and eternal life, they were very “sad, you see”—thought they could stump Jesus as well. As we read this account, you can almost hear them sniggering in the background.
- But Jesus’ response to them blindsides them: their whole concept of eternity is wrong; it is not simply a continuation of this life, but a much greater state of being—equal to that of angels.
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- This is one more of those times where the modern “Jesus was just a good man” idea is shot down once again...because He goes beyond previous Jewish ideas of the afterlife, and teaches of a spiritual existence far greater than what had theretofore been imagined...from the One who knows absolutely, because He has ordained it.
- The Sadducees had no belief in the resurrection because they only believed the Torah (the first five books of the Bible) was inspired scripture...and the Torah does not directly address the resurrection as do what we know are the other inspired books of the Old Testament.
- But, as Jesus points out, even the Torah speaks to the resurrection the story of Moses and the burning bush, where God calls Himself the God of Abraham, of Isaac and of Jacob—not of the dead, but of the living; not of non-existence, but of the eternally existent.
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- So we need not fear death itself, for we are made by God for eternity. Therefore, our only fear should be being out of God’s grace, remembering that death can find us at any moment.
- And, perhaps in preparation of bringing the Gentiles into the fold of the people of God, the early Jewish idea of the afterlife—very basic and unsure in the beginning—began to be near the time of Christ influenced by the philosophical musings of the Greeks...and after Alexander marched through Israel and Greeks settled among the Jews, those ideas of the eternal spirit and soul began to be more developed in Jewish religious thought.

- We see this in the later-written wisdom books such as Wisdom and Sirach, and we certainly see it in our first reading today from 2 Maccabees—the mother and her sons dying rather than to be unfaithful to God...and the last son says to his tormentor: “...*for you, there will be no resurrection to life.*”
- ...which Jesus affirms when He says: “...*all who are in the tombs will hear [the Lord’s] voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.*” (John 5:28-29)
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- The mercy of our individual (“particular) judgment by God—comes from our acceptance of—and our living according to—Christ...for God is a god of truth, and thus we must adhere to the truth, and thus we must adhere to Christ, because, as Jesus tells us: “...*for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice.*” (John 18:37)
- And He also says: “*You are my friends if you do what I command you.*” (John 15:14 RSV)
- Barring invincible ignorance (such as those who have never heard of, or been taught, Christ), those who have been taught of Christ must accept Christ for salvation. Works alone cannot merit salvation.
- The idea that we can make it to salvation without Christ or grace or worship of God is the error (heresy) of Pelagianism—that the simple merit of my works will bring me to Heaven.
- But Jesus tells us: “*Without me, you can do nothing.*” Without Him, works are in vain, because only in Christ are we brought to salvation, and thus we must be part of the Body of Christ.
- If we could make it on our own, there would have been no need for Jesus to come to us. We might still be in Judaism depending upon works of the law, which are not remotely sufficient to atone for sin, as the letter to the Hebrews affirms: “...*it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.*” (Hebrews 10:4)

- Only the infinite sacrifice of Jesus can atone for sin against the infinite God...and in being part of the Body of Christ, we are in Him as He walks, He heals, He forgives...as He hangs upon that cross.
- When we share in communion... His very Body and Blood—we become part of one another, and thus part of His Body.
- When we are faithful disciples, the Father sees us also on the cross in Jesus...and thus forgiveness and salvation become ours. Atonement becomes ours.
- The Lord cries out at death...and the Body trembles.
- Now, our cross is infinitely less...simply to hold to the teaching of Our Lord, and to reject the things of the world (as tempting as they can be) if they lead us away from God's instruction...from Jesus, the Word of God.
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- So...we reflect: What will I do when faced with challenge to my own faith?
- Well...the old saying goes: “forewarned is forearmed”...and when we contemplate and determine ahead of time to be faithful in all circumstances, it strengthens us when challenge actually comes.
- ...reminding us of the quote from the movie Count of Monte Cristo, when Dantes says to the young Mondego:
 - *“Life is a storm, my young friend...What makes you a man is what you do when that storm comes. You must look into that storm and shout: Do your worst, for I will do mine! [our worst, of course, meaning our best in this case] Then the fates will know you [for the person you truly are].”*

- To be Christian...and especially to be Catholic in our day...we must be ready to stand firm in the face of challenge...for challenges are inevitable. This is the promised crucible in which faith and love is tested.
- But, Jesus assures us...“*Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you...Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven...*” (Matthew 5:10-12 RSV)

Reading 1

[2 Mc 7:1-2, 9-14](#)

It happened that seven brothers with their mother were arrested and tortured with whips and scourges by the king, to force them to eat pork in violation of God's law.

One of the brothers, speaking for the others, said:

"What do you expect to achieve by questioning us?"

We are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our ancestors."

At the point of death he said:

"You accursed fiend, you are depriving us of this present life, but the King of the world will raise us up to live again forever. It is for his laws that we are dying."

After him the third suffered their cruel sport.

He put out his tongue at once when told to do so, and bravely held out his hands, as he spoke these noble words:

"It was from Heaven that I received these;

for the sake of his laws I disdain them;

from him I hope to receive them again."

Even the king and his attendants marveled at the young man's courage, because he regarded his sufferings as nothing.

After he had died,

they tortured and maltreated the fourth brother in the same way.

When he was near death, he said,

"It is my choice to die at the hands of men with the hope God gives of being raised up by him; but for you, there will be no resurrection to life."

[Ps 17:1, 5-6, 8, 15](#)

Responsorial Psalm

R. (15b) Lord, when your glory appears, my joy will be full.

Hear, O LORD, a just suit;

attend to my outcry;

hearken to my prayer from lips without deceit.

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

My steps have been steadfast in your paths,

my feet have not faltered.

I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God;

incline your ear to me; hear my word.

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

Keep me as the apple of your eye,

hide me in the shadow of your wings.
But I in justice shall behold your face;
on waking I shall be content in your presence.
R. **Lord, when your glory appears, my joy will be full.**

[2 Thes 2:16-3:5](#)

Reading 2

Brothers and sisters:

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father,
who has loved us and given us everlasting encouragement
and good hope through his grace,
encourage your hearts and strengthen them in every good deed
and word.

Finally, brothers and sisters, pray for us,
so that the word of the Lord may speed forward and be glorified,
as it did among you,
and that we may be delivered from perverse and wicked people,
for not all have faith.

But the Lord is faithful;
he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one.

We are confident of you in the Lord that what we instruct you,
you are doing and will continue to do.

May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God
and to the endurance of Christ.

[Lk 20:27-38](#) or [Lk 20:27, 34-38](#)

Gospel

Some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection,
came forward and put this question to Jesus, saying,

"Teacher, Moses wrote for us,
*If someone's brother dies leaving a wife but no child,
his brother must take the wife
and raise up descendants for his brother.*

Now there were seven brothers;
the first married a woman but died childless.

Then the second and the third married her,
and likewise all the seven died childless.

Finally the woman also died.

Now at the resurrection whose wife will that woman be?
For all seven had been married to her."

Jesus said to them,

"The children of this age marry and remarry;
but those who are deemed worthy to attain to the coming age

and to the resurrection of the dead
neither marry nor are given in marriage.

They can no longer die,

for they are like angels;

and they are the children of God

because they are the ones who will rise.

That the dead will rise

even Moses made known in the passage about the bush,

when he called out 'Lord, '

the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;

and he is not God of the dead, but of the living,

for to him all are alive."

or

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