

## **The 32nd Sunday in Ord. Time – November 5-6, 2022**

As we come to the end of the Church Year, the Church gives us Scripture readings that speak about the final things in life -- death, saints, remembrance of the dead, and resurrection from the dead.

In the creed that we recite every Sunday, we profess our belief in the resurrection of the dead and in the Nicene Creed, we even proclaim that we are looking forward to the life to come.

These are great statements of faith that we make, but how deeply do we take these to heart and let them influence our daily choices and life?

The first reading presents us with a mother and her seven sons who, because of their faith in God and resurrection, are ready and willing to give up their life on earth.

As the fourth son says – “It is my choice to die at the hands of men with the hope God gives of being raised up again by him.” All of the sons and their mother are willing to give up their life on earth rather than lose God or resurrection to a new life.

They fear the loss of God more than the loss of their life. This story, and the other readings as well, challenge us to evaluate the sincerity of our personal belief that we will be raised up after death to a new kind of life.

The Greeks that were dominating that region around the Mediterranean at the time of the first reading were seeking to unite their power by wiping out all other faiths and traditions. Many in the world today are seeking to wipe out God and all Christian faith and traditions.

So, how are we standing firm in our faith today? How much are we letting concern or fear about what others may think affect our actions? Paul, in today’s second reading from his Letter to the Thessalonians, prays that God will strengthen and encourage their hearts and strengthen them in every good deed and word, and that they may be delivered from perverse and wicked people, for, he says, not all have faith. – Paul then says that he is confident in the Lord that what he has instructed them they

are doing and will continue to do. Paul is praying for them and for us today that our faith in Christ will endure whatever test we may face.

When going for a degree in philosophy the first course one takes is logic. When one looks at the differences between men and women, we tend to see women as more nurturing, caring and attentive to feelings. We tend to think of men as more concerned about the facts than feelings and more focused on what is practical and true and logical. Think about how we men go to great lengths to make our plans for hunting – building stands, searching for the signs of deer, setting out trail cameras and much more. This natural concern for what is true and objective and practical is probably why we are called by God to take leadership in our families and take responsibility to guide our families to what is best for them.

However, men too have emotions. And – the most powerful of our emotions is fear. But there are different kinds of fear and we all need to understand what are good fears and what are bad fears..

In the book of Exodus, right after God gives the ten commandments, we read these strange words: “Moses answered the people: “ Do not fear, for God has come to you only to test you and put his fear upon you, lest you should sin.” Moses literally says, “Do not fear for God has come to put his fear upon you.” It seems that there are different kinds of fear, one which God wants us to have and one which He doesn’t want us to have. So which is which.

First of all, what is fear? Fear is the feeling or emotion that moves us to avoid some evil. When we sense a threat, fear is what urges us to take action to make sure that the threat doesn’t become a reality. Another way of looking at fear is that it is the impulse to preserve something we love and value, something that we are concerned that we don’t want to lose. Therefore, know our fears tells us what we love and want to hold on to.

So we need to order our fear. The goal isn’t fearlessness; the goal is to fear most the lost of what is most important. So what do we fear most? And what do we worry about the most? The

truth is that the things we spend most of our time worrying about are simply not the most important things.

We worry about our grades, or our kids grades in school or making the team. We worry about whatever meeting or deadline is coming – even though it will be forgotten as soon as its over. We worry about our finances or our health – even though we know that sooner or later we will die anyway, at which point money and health is not going to be an issue. Resurrection is in fact not the same as immortality. The Sadducees in the Gospel do not believe in the resurrection. They and many today think only in terms of how the present life will somehow continue on. But Jesus teaches that resurrection is a different kind of life – no more marrying, etc. We will not be angels but we will be like angels –sharing a new spiritual life in God.

But what about the things that we should worry about? Do we worry that we are setting a good example for our kids? And that we show them every day that we love them? And that we are helping them learn and live our faith?

Do we worry about certain bad habits that are more and more taking us away from the way of Christ? Do we worry about being generous enough with our giving to the Church or sharing with others in need? Do we worry that time is running out and we only have so many opportunities left to make the most of the one life that God has given us?

These are the goods and opportunities that we should be afraid of missing. These are things that we don't want to lose.

Now applying all this, how should we fear God? -- Too often our main fear is that God will take away some earthly thing that we love. We pray -- Dear God, please don't take away my health, or my job, or my kid's chance at success. But, do we remember that God only takes away lesser things so He can give us greater things. We can pray for God allow us to acquire or keep certain goods, but we shouldn't spend a lot time fearing their loss, since we know greater goods are on the way.

The one good that we, like the mother and her seven sons, should really fear is the loss of God Himself. – We should be

praying dear Lord, please don't let me lose You. – That fear is the beginning of wisdom. That fear expresses love that is rightly ordered.

And it is just this fear – the holy fear of the Lord – which will ensure that we will never lose what we love. For if we love God, we may be sure that we will have Him forever and that his promise of resurrection and new life will be there for us.

Jesus is telling us that know the *hows* and *whats* of resurrection is not nearly as important as believing in *who* – in the one who makes all things possible.