

Thirty Second Sunday of Ordinary Time November 6, 2022

Our Lady of Perpetual Help

First Reading — 2 Maccabees 7:1-2, 9-14

1 It happened also that seven brothers and their mother were arrested and were being compelled by the king, under torture with whips and cords, to partake of unlawful swine's flesh. 2 One of them, acting as their spokesman, said, "What do you intend to ask and learn from us? For we are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our fathers." ... 9 And when he was at his last breath, he said, "You accursed wretch, you dismiss us from this present life, but the King of the universe will raise us up to an everlasting renewal of life, because we have died for his laws." 10 After him, the third was the victim of their sport. When it was demanded, he quickly put out his tongue and courageously stretched forth his hands, 11 and said nobly, "I got these from Heaven, and because of his laws I disdain them, and from him I hope to get them back again." 12 As a result the king himself and those with him were astonished at the young man's spirit, for he regarded his sufferings as nothing. 13 When he too had died, they maltreated and tortured the fourth in the same way. 14 And when he was near death, he said, "One cannot but choose to die at the hands of men and to cherish the hope that God gives of being raised again by him. But for you there will be no resurrection to life!"

Responsorial Psalm PS 17:1, 5-6, 8, 15

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.

Second Reading — 2 Thessalonians 2:16—3:5

16 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, 17 comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work

and word. 3:1 Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed on and triumph, as it did among you, 2 and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men; for not all have faith. 3 But the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from evil. 4 And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things which we command. 5 May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

Gospel Reading — Luke 20:27-38 27

There came to him some Sadducees, those who say that there is no resurrection, 28 and they asked him a question, saying, "Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife but no children, the man must take the wife and raise up children for his brother. 29 Now there were seven brothers; the first took a wife, and died without children; 30 and the second 31 and the third took her, and likewise all seven left no children and died. 32 Afterward the woman also died. 33 In the resurrection, therefore, whose wife will the woman be? For the seven had her as wife." 34 And Jesus said to them, "The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage; 35 but those who are accounted worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, 36 for they cannot die anymore, because they are equal to angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection. 37 But that the dead are raised, even Moses showed, in the passage about the bush, where he calls the Lord the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. 38 Now he is not God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him."

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INVITATION TO PRAY

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God...

Proclaim the Scriptures out loud

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

INVITATION TO REFLECT

Did you notice the increased awareness of heaven and of life after death after 9/11 and subsequent terrorism around the world? Even before the tragic attack of September 11, 2001, people were speaking more openly, albeit often mistakenly, about life after death. The terrorists were motivated by a totally inaccurate understanding of what God is like, what kind of actions he honors, and the reward of heaven and what it is like. For many of the victims and their families' life after death and the reality of heaven is a hope that sustains them. Though talk of heaven and life after death may now be more in vogue in this country it is not a new issue. Since the beginning, when God warned Adam and Eve, "You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die," mankind has known that there is more to life than death, and has sought to ascertain what it is and how we can achieve it. In Jesus' day it was not only a hot topic but also a hot point of religious controversy. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection and eternal life, nor in angels or spirits, nor did they believe in a coming Messiah. Their life was wrapped up in this life. Consequently, people have made a not altogether inappropriate play on words about their name, explaining, "The Sadducee does not believe in eternal life, that is why he is sad-you see!" The Pharisee, though also very legalistic, did believe in the resurrection, angels, spirits, and the coming Messiah. So the controversy about heaven was ever present in the religious life of Jesus' day. In their attempt to prove their point the Sadducees asked Jesus a rather convoluted question involving the death of seven brothers, a wife who was subsequently wed to the next brother after each died, and their relationships in heaven. As ever, Jesus was not taken in by their attempted trickery but rather turned their question into an occasion for teaching the truth about heaven. Jesus points out that "marrying and giving in marriage" is a characteristic of this life not of the next. Very simply his explanation says, don't fashion heaven in the image of earth, it is different by nature. The rules here do not apply in heaven; they are suspended and superseded by a higher law. In heaven the nature of eternal life and the nature of eternal beings is wholly spiritual and not even remotely earthly. In addition, Jesus clarifies that not only is the nature of life changed but the nature of the people who go to heaven is also changed. Death is no longer present, "for they cannot die any more." Death has lost its sting— forever. This is the hope of eternal life. The speaker at the NYC memorial for the victims of the September 11, 2001 attack was correct when he stated that those who have gone from us, in spite of their love for us who linger, would not choose to come back. For not only has death been de-fanged, but the residents of heaven have become "sons of God" and "sons of the resurrection." There can be no more exalted and wonderful position. "The Sadducees do not have our hope for the resurrection, since they 'know neither the scriptures nor the power of God,' who is able to restore what is lost, to raise what is dead to life; to revive what has rotted away, to gather together what is corruptible and finite. The Lord promised to do this, and he gives as a guarantee the promises he has already fulfilled. So let your faith speak of this to you, since your hope will not be disappointed even though your love may be put to the test."* Like the Sadducees and Pharisees, we have the opportunity to believe what we want about the nature of the resurrection and life after death. However, the nature of the resurrection and life after death is in no way influenced by what we believe. It is a reality that is as sure as Jesus himself, and of which we can get a foreshadowing through Scripture. However, we must seek the Holy Spirit's help to ensure that we view earthly life with eternal insight rather than view eternal life with earth's limited vision. When we do, we will no longer view God as the "God of the dead," but rather as the God "of the living" and hopefully will

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“live to him.”

INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING

First Reading —

1. What is the spiritual principle by which this family lived?

Second Reading —

2. How does “eternal comfort and good hope” enable us to remain “steadfastness” in Christ?

Gospel Reading —

3. To what degree do you think about heaven and life after death?
4. What have you come to believe about heaven and life after death? What other insight does Scripture give about heaven?
5. How should belief in, and consciousness of heaven and life after death affect the way we live?

INVITATION TO ACT

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another’s openness and sensitivity. Conclude with a final prayer.