

32ND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

By Al Mansfield

2 Maccabees 7:1-2, 9-14

Psalm 17

2 Thessalonians 2:16-3:5

Luke 20:27-38

IS THIS ALL THERE IS?

That is the question that all generations have asked about this life on earth. Today, the word of God assures us of the promise of eternal life with the Lord for those who are deemed worthy to attain to the coming age and to the resurrection of the dead.

2 MACCABEES

Our first reading takes place at a time when the Israelites were under persecution from the Seleucid Kings (168-134 BC). The Maccabee brothers led a guerilla revolution against them, which eventually proved to be successful. The Second Book of Maccabees relates stories of Jewish heroism in the midst of this intense religious persecution.

Today's selection is taken from the account of a mother and her seven sons, who were made to undergo extremely violent torture and deaths for refusing to violate God's law.

The lesson today is that there is life after physical death. In the words of the fourth martyred brother: "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 (his persecutors) there will be no resurrection of life."

The Responsorial, Psalm 17, is a prayer of faith in the coming life, peace, joy , and glory with the Lord in eternity.

GOSPEL

The gospel today highlights one of the differences between the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees were in the majority and they accepted the Old Testament books plus all the rabbinical rules. They also believed in the resurrection of the dead.

The Sadducees, on the other hand, only accepted the first five books of the Old Testament and did not believe in the resurrection. They challenged Jesus with a question based on the Mosaic law requiring a brother to marry his deceased brother's widow.

Jesus answers the question with a strong emphasis on the resurrection of the dead and the afterlife, where the deceased "neither marry nor are given in marriage."

This incident is related in the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. Luke, however, omits the strong indictment of Jesus against the questioners that is found in the other two gospels: "You err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God" (Matt. 22:29; Mark 12:24).

The bottom line is: "God is not God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are living."

2 THESSALONIANS

To speak about the four last things - death, judgment, heaven, hell - is necessary, but can trigger some unease. Today's second reading delivers words of "encouragement and good hope through his grace," assuring us of the Father's love and desire that we be saved.

St. Paul acknowledges that some are "perverse and wicked people for not all have faith." But Paul also emphasizes that "the Lord is faithful; he will strengthen you and guard you from the evil one. He prays confidently that the Lord's grace will "direct us to the love of God and to the endurance of Christ.

FOR THIS LIFE ONLY?

This life is called a "valley of tears," filled with trials and sufferings, ending in physical death. St. Paul tells us, "If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied" (1 Cor. 15:19). Our readings today set before us the hope in eternal life, won by Jesus through his life, death and resurrection. Thanks be to God!