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32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time - 6 November 2022

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6 November 2022

Thirty-Second Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Joe Tedesco

Introduction

For God, 'all are in fact living'. Our Sunday liturgy encourages us to draw strength from this joyful truth. Through the gift of faith, we find comfort knowing that death is a passage through to the eternal life offered to all.

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you are the firstborn of the dead.
Lord, have mercy.

You teach us how to be faithful.
Christ, have mercy.

You are the resurrection and the life.
Lord, have mercy.

Collect

The oration

Almighty and merciful God,
graciously keep from us all adversity,
so that, unhindered in mind and body alike,
we may pursue in freedom of heart
the things that are yours.

Little is known of the historical origins of this collect, though it is found in the Roman liturgical sources of the seventh century and has been in use up to and including the present.

The collect sets the faithful's existence on earth within the context of a thoroughgoing, vivid struggle against sin, death, the devil and his forces. This confrontation is exhibited in all aspects of the spiritual life of the human person, in mind and body equally. Believers, however, have a further perspective on this confrontation. In their faith in God, they trust in the divine power, mercy and

propitiation to be able to drive out, equally from both mind and body, all that inhibits their freedom to love, worship and obey the Holy One. Inner harmony and spiritual freedom follow when God frees all aspects of the human person from sin, temptation and the power of the devil.

First Reading

2 Maccabees 7:1-2,9-14

Less than two centuries before the coming of Christ, the events of this reading depict a time of persecution for the people of God. It attests to the promise of eternal life offered to all who remain faithful to God.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 16:1, 5-6, 8, 15. R. v. 15

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

As with the first reading and the gospel, we are drawn to express our confidence in the promise of life after death. When we reach our eternal life, our joy will be full.

Second Reading

2 Thessalonians 2:16-3:5

Paul reminds us that the Lord is faithful and gives us strength and comfort even in the face of evil.

Gospel Reading

Luke 20:27-38

Jesus responds to a group of Sadducees attempting to ridicule faith in the resurrection. Doing so, Jesus lifts our vision to take in something of the life-giving nature of God.

Reflection

The first reading includes the notion of the afterlife, a point of focus for the liturgical season in November. However, it is couched in a particularly gruesome event that is worth pondering as a starting point for this week's reflection. It describes the scene where heroic brothers and their mother remain faithful to the revelation of God despite the cost in great suffering then death at the hands of a wicked king.

The details of the torture are certainly one of the more uncomfortable parts of Scripture, especially the part of the mother who must watch all her sons die gruesome deaths before her. We are spared all but an allusion to it in the Lectionary

references, yet the detail in the fuller text serves to illustrate the level of courage and faithfulness the brothers and their mother show. Indeed, even the evil king and his courtiers were 'astounded by the ... courage and utter indifference to suffering' (2 Macc 7:12).

Such courage obviously draws one into a certain personal comparison. When pressed by circumstances and challenges, when it would seem easier to abandon my convictions, can I remain true to my faith in God?

It is highly unlikely that I will face the sort of situation described in the first reading, but I would like to think that I could maintain the sort of conviction shown by such heroes of the faith. However, there is certainly doubt in my mind that I could. It sits uneasy and is confronting. So, I ask; what is it about the brothers and their mother that allows them to endure such tribulation, to be virtuous in the face of evil and stay true to their God? There seems no simple answer to this. However, one thing that is clear is that they had their eye on the prize, on the promises of God and the fullness of life that only God can offer.

The Gospel adds an important layer to this. When the full version is used (including vv. 27-33), a line of questioning from 'some Sadducees' supplies the context to Jesus' teaching. The Sadducees did not believe in the afterlife and wanting to show up the belief, they pose a cynical question to Jesus. They draw on a technical understanding of the law found in Deuteronomy (25:5-6) and modern scholars tend to agree that the questioning is largely rhetorical and intended as ridicule because the practice was essentially in disuse in the early first century.¹ Despite the cynicism, Jesus offers a response.

What is interesting about Jesus' answer is that it does not address the line of questioning from the Sadducees directly. Rather, Jesus indicates that the legal definition of marriage that they are working with is not applicable to the resurrected life at all. Jesus is suggesting that there is an altogether different paradigm at play that the Sadducees do not get.

So, is this 'life beyond' at all intelligible? Can we know something of it? If we think as the Sadducees do, then probably not. However, Jesus, ever grabbing the teaching moment, is offering us something. In response to the Sadducees, Jesus throws a puzzle of sorts back to them. He indicates that the very figure they revere in Moses acknowledged that God is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. These are figures long gone, yet, were understood to be their God and ever will be. To expand, God is not the God of these figures (or anybody else for that matter) in isolated pockets of time. God is not the God of past figures in the past. No, God is God of those that have gone before us, is the same God that we experience in the here and now, and will be for those to come.

When we put ourselves into the scene, we see that Jesus seems to be drawing attention away from our own deliberations, hang-ups and, perhaps, even distractions on this notion of the afterlife toward the only thing that can help us make sense of it; that is God alone. A profound truth is offered to us, 'God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.' God is described in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament

as the 'living God'. If God is, then God is life. For us, death looks final, it occurs in time and that time fades. However, for God, being life itself, 'all of them are alive' (v. 38).

Returning to the first reading, when the brothers and their mother were willing to die for the Torah, they were not simply doing so on legalistic principle or to demonstrate religious purity for the sake of it (something the Sadducees seemed to be caught up in). Rather, they knew the giver of the Commandments, the Lord God for who they were unwilling to forsake under any circumstance. It was this which allowed them to see beyond the immediate experience. They were in touch with something of the love of God which drew them to see the fullness of life offered to them.

We too find our hope and joy not in our own strength or powers of reason. Indeed, the reality of death is an ever-present reminder of our limiting mortality. Rather, we reach out, encouraged by Jesus, to focus on the one who is life itself. We not only meet a God who draws our own selves to life eternal but, by doing so, we also find joy in the realisation that all are alive to God and so even those who have gone before us are, by God's very nature, not gone at all.

Footnote 1. E.g., Leon Morris, *Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 307-308.



We shall
be raised up
by God.

2 Macc 7:14

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

With the psalmist we acclaim that when the Lord comes in glory our joy will be full. In the sure hope of that joy, therefore, we pray in faith for our needs and the needs of our world.

Petitions

We pray for the leaders of our Church, especially Pope Francis, and the leaders in our clergy, religious and laity. May they live in a way that tells the world that the resurrection is real and that eternal life has already been won for us.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all the leaders of nations and economic powers that they will understand that money does not matter once we die and therefore to live for things that matter beyond this life.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all the sick that they will be encouraged to understand that the life-giving nature of faith is there for them to grasp with both hands and heart through the love and care of those around them.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the People of God here and throughout the world that we too will live as resurrected people, saved by the Lamb, ready for eternal life as we journey prayerfully to the assembly of the 2023 Synod. *(Pause)* Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the People of God in Australia that we will continue to work through the Plenary Council while listening to the Spirit and carefully discerning our future.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who grieve that they will be comforted knowing their loved ones are with God in eternity.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

We are people of hope and so we know that God will hear these prayers and the prayers that remain silent in our hearts. We pray through the power of the Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Title	AOV1	AOV2	AOVK	GA	CWB	CWBII	S&S1
Centre of my life		170		444			
Christ is alive with joy we sing				365	639	353	
Christ is made the sure foundation				482	640		
Eye has not seen	146			466			
For all the saints				551	679	439	
God of peace		138		553		546	
How can I keep from singing?				454			
I am the bread of life (Talbot)							153
I am the bread of life (Toolan)	49			204	718	509	
I heard the voice of Jesus say	54			468		512	
I know that my redeemer lives							154
In faith and hope and love				442	722	520	
Keep in mind	180			391	730	530	
Living in the light			66				
Lord of all hopefulness					738	541	
Love divine, all loves excelling				463	740	552	
O God, our help in ages past	175			459	767	568	
On eagle's wings	153			452		654	
Praise, my soul, the king of heaven	78				789	588	
Praise the Lord, you heavens adore him				409	790	583	
Sing with all the saints in glory						147	
Soul of my saviour					811	164	
The Church's one foundation				483	819	614	
The God of Abraham praise						617	
The living God my shepherd Is					827		
There's a wideness in God's mercy					838	624	
Though the mountains may fall	182			453			
Unless a grain of wheat	35			500		635	
We are children of the living God			15				

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 16: *Lord, when your glory appears, my joy will be full.*

	CWB	JOBC	LPC
Psalm 16	444	pg. 106	pg. 171

Music selections by Michael Mangan

You are my shepherd (FWS) *Based on Ps 22/23* [Gifts, Communion]