

1st Reading: 2 Maccabees 7:1-2, 9-14 [We are ready to die because we believe in the resurrection]

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 17 ♪♪ *Lord, when your glory appears, my joy will be full.* ♪♪

2nd Reading: 2 Thessalonians 2:16-3:5 [May the Lord direct your hearts to love of God & the endurance of Christ]

Gospel: Luke 20:27-38 [We are children of the resurrection]

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke (Luke 20:27-38 – Lamsa Translation from the Aramaic)

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

"Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother should die, and he has a wife but no children, let his brother take his wife and raise up descendants for his brother.

Now there were seven brothers; the first married and died without children. The second married his brother's wife and died without children. And the third one married her again; and likewise the seven of them; and they all died, leaving no children. And at last the woman also died.

Now at the resurrection, to which one of them will she be a wife?

For seven of them married her."

Jesus said to them, "The men of this world marry women, and *women are given to men in marriage.*

But those who are worthy of the coming age, and the resurrection from the dead, *neither take women in marriage nor are women given to them in marriage.*

They cannot die again, because they are equal to the angels; and they are the children of God,

because they are sons and daughters of the resurrection.

Even Moses revealed that the dead will rise in the passage about the burning bush when he called the Lord, 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.' To the Lord, all of them are alive, for The Lord is not the God of the dead but of the living."

♪♪ *We come to share our story, we come to break the bread,
We come to know our rising from the dead.* ♪♪

After praying over today's Gospel, my first question was **SO WHAT?**

Who cares about whose wife is whose after death? But as I kept asking the Holy Spirit to show me what Jesus was trying to say, I heard another, deeper question:

What difference does it make to me, here and now, that Jesus rose from the dead?

The scriptures for today's Mass teach us two profound truths. *First*, that the resurrection of Jesus - which reveals him as the Christ - is at the core of our faith, and *Second*, that the Spirit of God is inviting us to a living faith, to come to know **our** rising from the dead and, even more, to **live** the life of a child of the resurrection long before we die.

The Sadducees who were coming after Jesus didn't believe in the possibility of resurrection from the dead, they were **fundamentalists**. They only accepted what was written down in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, also called the Torah. And, by the way, they were also the **wealthy** upper class of the time of Jesus, and were too comfortable to want to see any change in their religion or way of life. The Sadducees did not accept the writings of the Prophets, which challenged people to share their wealth with the poor. Luke blames them for inciting the Romans to crucify Jesus.

But when they pose this problem about the 7 brothers to trap Jesus, he doesn't say, "*What a dumb question!*" even though he could have. He goes right to the heart of their reason for trying to trap him - their lack of faith in the resurrection. They think they've got Jesus in a corner by asking whose wife will the woman be, but Jesus uses their own hero, Moses, to destroy their argument:

Moses, in the book of Exodus, part of the Pentateuch - the part of the Bible the Sadducees accepted, - says that God is both the God of the Patriarchs of the past, and the God of the living, so there must be a resurrection. He beats them at their own game, speaking a language they could understand.

When we pray the Creed, the profession of faith, we say that we believe that Jesus rose from the dead, & that we believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting. So I ask again: *How does our faith in the risen Christ, and in his promise that we will rise with him affect the way we live today?*

The promise of resurrection was very important to the people described in the first reading. Seven brothers and their mother became martyrs in a rebellion against a tyrant. Their faith in the resurrection gave them the courage to die, and eventually to defeat their enemy. The story of the books of Maccabees is the story celebrated by the Jews at Hanukkah to this day.

A person who is not afraid to die cannot be forced to do evil. He or she is someone tyrants of every age have feared. Martin Luther King Jr. was such a person. So is Malala Yousafzai, the teen-aged girl from Pakistan who was shot because she wanted to get an education and to work for other girls to go to school. I believe that in our own time, she is someone who lives as a child of the resurrection even though she is not a Christian.

And the resurrection makes a difference even before we face immanent death, whether as a martyr or by natural causes. My aunt Del, who is in hospice care, is very much at peace, even though she knows she is about to die. And she has lived her whole life in a loving and honest way because of her deep faith.

Living as sons & daughters of the resurrection is about how we live right now, not just after we die. Sometimes I wonder if more people believe in life *after* death than have the guts to live life *before* they die. But that is really the point of faith, isn't it?

Jesus responds to the questions of the Sadducees about some rules around marriage. His response is about much more than the relationships between husbands and wives. The laws the Sadducees quoted were about keeping the tribe alive and they were obsolete even in the time of Jesus. The specific rules around marriage are different from culture to culture and have changed over the ages.

The culture of the time of Jesus assumed that women were property and children were not really persons until they grew up. And many of the people of the time believed that the only way they lived on was through their children.

When Jesus is asked, to which brother will the woman be a wife, it could be phrased, which man will she belong to? I used a translation from the Aramaic to bring out this issue. Most modern translations soften the language about a woman being given to a man in marriage, and a man taking a wife on as property.

His answer is not just about resurrection after we die, it implies that there will be no **owning** of one person by another among those who live the life of God's kingdom here on earth. We did not understand that part of the Gospel in this country until the 19th century, when slavery became illegal.

And you may think that women being considered as property, and the enslaving of others is a thing of the past - but we still have a long way to go, when women in some countries can be beaten or killed by men for having uncovered heads or for going to school, and when human trafficking is still a profitable world-wide reality.

The message of Jesus about the value of every human person still needs to be lived and applied in our 21st century - both in the relationship of husband and wife, and in every other human relationship.

And what about celibacy? The celibacy Sr. Anna & I are called to live is meant to remind the world that we are *all* called to be one community of love. That we are all called to be in a relationship of love with Christ and with each other that is as deep and as intimate as the love of husband and wife.

While we are still on the way to the kingdom of God, celibacy - whether it is a result of religious vows or of life circumstance - can be a sign to the world that the resurrection is real on earth - that God's love does not exclude any of God's children, that we are all called to grow towards a communion with each other that respects women, children and men - of every race, religion, culture and way of life as persons loved by the same God of the living.

But this risen life is not within our power to achieve - either before or after we die.

We cannot make it happen through our technology, our science, social media, our political power or our religious practices. It is always, and has always been a **gift** from God.

In order to believe in, to trust, to know, to experience *our* rising from the dead, we must enter into the Mystery of Christ who has died, who is risen and who comes again to us and through us. We are offered that gift today, at this Eucharist, at this renewal of the **gift** of our Baptism and Confirmation:

♪♪ **Bread of life and cup of promise, in this meal we are made one.
In our dying and our rising, may your kingdom come.
We come to share our story, we come to break the bread,
We come to know our rising from the dead. ♪♪**