

32nd Sunday OT – Luke 20:27-38

Jesus' reply to the Sadducees is an example of his public teaching in Jerusalem reported by Luke. The conservative party among the Jews, they did not hold with recent ideas in Judaism like that of *resurrection*. This had appeared only recently in books like Daniel, Wisdom, and Maccabees. The Old Testament required a person *to glorify God in this life alone*.

They question Jesus by quoting Deuteronomy on a brother's duty to marry his brother's widow. They tell the story of a woman who outlived seven brothers which made the idea of resurrection absurd. Jesus did not rebuke them for knowing neither the scriptures nor the power of God. He appealed first to the doctrine of ***the two ages***. The present age is that of the present wicked world. The future age is a world without death and hence *without* the need for the new life that comes through marriage. Those who belong to it will be ***like angels***, whose existence the Sadducees denied, and would be children of the Resurrection. Secondly, he quoted the words of God to Moses at the burning bush when he proclaimed himself a God of the living and not of the dead. God could not be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob if they were no longer alive.

Two important points caught my attention in today's Gospel. The first point is that Jesus appealed to the doctrine of the ***Two Ages***, present and future. If one is familiar with Saint Augustine's writings, his famous book called the *City of God*. which presents human history as a conflict between what he calls the Earthly City and the City of God, a conflict that is destined to end in victory for the later. The City of God is marked by people who forgo earthly pleasure to dedicate themselves to the eternal truths of God, now revealed fully in the Christian faith. The Earthly City, on the other hand, consist of people who have immersed themselves in the cares and pleasures of the present, passing world.

Also notice that Jesus, in answering the Sadducees on the resurrection, mentioned that we will be like ***angels*** and children of the Resurrection, the second important point. Most would have preferred that Jesus said

we would continue to be living *the good old life* for those who “made it,” as in retirement.

However, we usually think of angels as having no bodies but pure intellect, at least that was Saint Thomas’ belief, which would be a little difficult to continue living *the good old life* as we have experienced it here on earth. I don’t think Jesus meant angels of pure intellect, but maybe as Saint Paul tells us - ***a new creation***. Otherwise, Jesus would not have bothered to prove that he was not a ghost by eating a piece of fish.

Jesus appeared to his apostles with and without his marks of crucifixion. For example, when he was on the shore after his resurrection roasting fish for them to eat. They didn’t see a ghost nor did they see a man who had been crucified. John the Beloved recognized it was the Lord.

“The Church...holds that...the world is in a dramatic struggle between good and evil, between light and darkness...(but also that) the Lord is the goal of human history. (The Lord is also the focal point of the longings and joy of every human heart and the answer to all our yearnings,” Vatican II document: **Gaudium de Spes**.

Heaven is not only our goal but a place to be lived now within ourselves. Jesus reminds us that the Kingdom of God is within, and through our baptism, we are members in the Kingdom of God and we keep our ***membership active*** through loving one another Christ Jesus has taught us. On our Earthly City we are seduced to turn our love in on ourselves, but in the City of God our Creator seduces us to turn our love outwards toward others through Christ. Jeremiah writes, “You seduced me, O Lord, and I let myself be seduced; you were too strong for me, and you triumphed.”

At the table of the Eucharist, we are united to both the City of God and the Earthly City, when we break open the Word of God and in the Breaking of the Bread, just as at Emmaus in the home of Cleopas and his friend. Jesus is among us encouraging us, even seducing us, to live for the future age, the City of God, where whether we will be like angels, we will have hearts that will continue to love one another here and in the next life.