

## The Thirty Second Sunday of Ordinary Time Cycle C

After the death of Alexander the Great, his empire was divided among leaders of his army. A descendent of one of these leaders, Antiochus Epiphanies decided **that, to** unify the territories under his rule, there should be one religion. Since he also ruled over Palestine, he wanted to eliminate the Jewish religion. He forbade the practice of the Jewish Sabbath and other feasts. He burnt their religious books. He placed statues of Greek gods in the temple and promoted the Greek lifestyle in Jerusalem with gymnasiums

In today's reading, he decides to force a mother and her seven sons to eat pork, which was considered ritually unclean, and eating it was forbidden. Rather than break the Law, each preferred to die. Each of the sons also expresses faith in a life after the one in this world and because of this belief none of them was afraid to die.

Even before Jesus' time there was a belief in the resurrection of the dead among certain groups of Jews.

Do you believe in a life after death, which we call the resurrection of the just? Unless our faith in the resurrection is unshakeable, we may not be prepared to die for our faith, and worse yet, we may not be prepared to defend it in the face of persecution. I believe that soon, we, (the Catholic Church), will face persecution, because of our God' given beliefs on the sanctity of marriage and life. Although the eating of pork was not a major infraction of the Law, like the offering of incense or sacrifice to false gods, the whole family refused to comply and suffered martyrdom. What would you have done? Maybe Antiochus Epiphanies taught that he could demand a simple infraction then follow up with greater infractions. Beware of accepting minor attacks on our faith. the larger ones come later.

We believe in the resurrection because Jesus taught his disciples about it, and after his death he appeared to Mary Magdalene, the apostles when the doors were closed, and the disciples on the road to Emmaus. The resurrection is the central pillar of our faith. Faith is the belief in the promises of Christ, which we cannot empirically (scientifically) verify.

It appeared that the Sadducees in Jesus' time did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. The Jewish Law stated that another brother had the responsibility to impregnate his brother's widow if she was childless. The reasons for this custom were:

- a) To rise up a descendent for his dead brother. The child would be considered the child of the older brother and be able, if male to inherit his property.
- b) The widow could not inherit her husband's property but was entitled to support from it. She also needed a child to support her in her old age. (Women did not work and there was no Social Security system at that time.)

The Sadducees proposed a ridiculous situation based on this custom, to demonstrate that this teaching of "life after death" would create problems for people who married more than once.

Jesus clarified that the relationship between married couples in heaven will be different. Since there is no need to procreate, there are no sexual relationships in heaven, hence married love will be different.

Jesus argued that Moses called God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob because although they (these patriarchs) had died, they were alive and had not become nothingness. Exodus 3:6 God told Moses that "I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" not "I used to be the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob".

If we believe in life after death (the resurrection), on the day of judgment we shall have to stand before the throne of

God and give an account of our lives. What acts of loving kindness or forgiveness (mercy) will we be able to mention?