

32nd Sunday- C 2013

Homilies are vehicles for breaking open the Word of God. First read the Sunday readings at <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/111013.cfm>

2 MACCABEES 7:1-2, 9-14; 2 THESSALONIANS 2:16-3:5, LUKE 20:27-38

So, at the resurrection, who will that woman be?

Now, what a silly question. The first clue is who is asking the question. It's the Sadducees and Scripture even starts out saying they don't believe in the resurrection. So, the question isn't serious on its face. The question has another motive. The motive is to discredit Jesus, to box him in with no way out other than to renounce the resurrection because of a sophistry of wit.

The Sadducees were the most conservative and literal of the Jewish groups. They rejected the traditions that had developed with the Pharisees. If it wasn't explicitly found in the books of Moses, then it wasn't real. Resurrection as a concept was fairly new, only around 200 years old by the time of Christ and the Sadducees were having nothing to do with it.

While our Old Testament reading from Maccabees attest to the resurrection, this holy book of revelation was very late in the Old Testament period and was not accepted by the Jews as part of the Torah. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that the early Church recognized Maccabees as part of divine revelation.

Yet the story of the seven brothers and their mother's sacrifice in fidelity to God showed how fiercely they embraced the promise of the resurrection.

However, let's take a closer look at this silly question. It is indicative of how we can appreciate something on a human level and then, in our search for truth, translate it to the divine.

The marriage relationship reflects one of the highest orders of human relationship. This is the complimentary relationship of one man and one woman dedicating themselves to each other, unconditionally, exclusively and for life. The human desires that the institution brings to fulfillment are recorded in the poetry of the ages. Even in Scripture, the Song of Songs portrays the most intimate and mystical union with God in terms of the marriage experience. That is why the Song of Songs is said to be most popular with the Mystics of the Church.

Marriage of course is not the sole model for participating in the highest orders of human relationship. Those who have embraced the calling of celibacy also foretell of the mystical union with God that awaits us. A celibate person is in a position to love others in a non-exclusive way. Some have said that as an *eschatological sign of*

the future, celibacy challenges our culture's values with a reminder that a time will come when there are no spouses or sexual relations.¹ This is as much as we heard Jesus say in the Gospel today.

Jesus is pointing at the fulfillment of our human and divine destiny in the promise of the resurrection. This is more than just fanciful thinking about who is whose wife or how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. Jesus is showing us our destiny because that is what we were conceived for. Our destiny is dependent upon how we embrace Jesus' saving gift, his sacrifice on the cross, instituted sacramentally through the Eucharist. In this way, we can live in hope of our future resurrection coming to fulfillment on the Last Day, the day of Jesus' 2nd coming.

We can live in that new creation as we move forward in our pilgrimage towards that Last Day.

Our Catechism says:

United with Christ by Baptism, believers already truly participate in the heavenly life of the risen Christ, but this life remains "hidden with Christ in God. (Col 3:3) The Father has already "raised us up with him and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus."(Eph 2:6) Nourished with his body in the Eucharist, we already belong to the Body of Christ. When we rise on the last day we "also will appear with him in glory"(Col 3:4) CCC 1003

This takes us beyond the silly questions.

The serious question is what does it mean for me if I already participate in the heavenly life of the risen Christ? What does my life look like? What are my relationships like? What is my prayer life like? Who am I if I am a child of God, living today, risen in Christ, destined for an eternity in body and soul?

What does this mean for you?

¹ Rev. Kenneth Schmidt