

Homily Resources – Sunday 10 November 2019, 32nd in Ordinary Time

Readings: 2 Mac 7:1-2,9-14; 2 Thess 2:16 – 3:5; Lk 20:27-38

Summary: In these last final weeks of the Church year we are talking about “ultimate,” last things. The reality which we call the resurrection, is the main subject of our readings today. These readings not only recognize the resurrection but also show that what we do with our lives on earth determines the reward or punishment that will follow. Hence, for these last weeks and the first weeks of Advent we will be concerned about the four last things: heaven and hell, death and judgment. How can we become “worthy” of eternal life?

Notes on the Readings

1. 2 Mac 7:1-2, 9-14. This reading is the first explicitly clear reference in the Bible to the resurrection. This is the latest book written in the Old Testament, approximately 150 B.C. Here we have the record of seven brothers and their mother. They were tortured by the Hellenistic King Antiochus Epiphanes to force them to eat pork which was prohibited by Jewish law. One of the brothers said, “We are ready to die rather than transgress the laws of our ancestors.” The second said, at the point of his death, “You accursed fiend, you are depriving us of this present life, but the King of the world will raise us up to live again forever. It is for his laws that we are dying.” (Note, the resurrection is also referenced in 2 Mc 12:44; 14:46 and Dn 12:2). (Mc 14:46 also documents prayers for the deceased). This reading centers theologically on profession of faith in the resurrection.

2 Thess 2:16 -3:5. Here Saint Paul makes clear to the Christians of Thessalonica that our behavior in this present time makes possible a future in glory. The Christian knows that God has given us a consolation, a hope, which is the resurrection to eternal life. He, therefore, exhorts them to holy and disciplined living in an evil world, so that they may be *worthy* of the promises of God.

3. Gospel - Lk 20:27-38. Here Jesus corrects the Sadducees who denied that there is a resurrection. He makes clear that in “the coming age” there is no marriage or reproduction. Our glorified bodies will be very different than our earthly bodies.

4. What is the resurrection of the body? What happens to us when we die?

(See CCC Glossary and #988, and ##992-1065 which deal with “last things”).

(See also the book, *Who moved the Stone* by Frank Morrison).

5. What happens to us at death? See CCC #997ff. “In death, the separation of the soul from the body, the human body decays and the soul goes to meet God, while awaiting its reunion with its glorified body. God.. will definitively grant incorruptible life to our bodies by reuniting them with our souls, through the resurrection of (the last) judgment.”

6. Who will rise? “All the dead will rise. ‘those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have don evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (Jn 5:29). Important to note, it is not only the saved who will be raised. At the Last Judgment all will be resurrected and will see clearly the judgment upon them.

7. Concerning the resurrection: how easy it is to be trapped by ignorance and lack of belief. Story:

One fine fall day two caterpillars were walking along. Looking up into the sky and seeing a butterfly, the one poked the other with a couple of elbows and said, "You couldn't get me up in one of those things for a million dollars!

How easy it is to be trapped by ignorance. Let us look at our belief concerning the resurrection.

8. The first point is whether we even believe in anything Supernatural. Let’s look briefly at my summary, “Evidences for the Supernatural: a Bibliography”. This makes clear that there is a lot of evidence for an entire different dimension of the supernatural.

- 1) Encountering the demonic, possessions, exorcism, curses, and the like;
- 2) Near-death and out of body experiences;
- 3) The Resurrection of Jesus, Christian miracles and Eucharistic miracles;
- 4) Current miracles investigated by science for the canonization of recent saints;

- 5) Scientific investigation into major areas of science that show that such development is most likely not possible without “intelligent design”. This series of documented instances of supernatural spiritual reality show us that it is reasonable to believe in the “Four Last Things: Heaven, Hell, Death and Judgment.” (CCC 1020-1060).

9. Biblically, the longest passage on the nature of the resurrection in the N.T. is 1 Cor 15. Here we see that most of the complaints and arguments against the resurrection are not modern; they existed from the beginning and St. Paul is asserting the truth of the experience of the early Church.

10. The resurrection of the dead refers to both heaven and hell. This is not just the separation of body and soul at the point of death. It also refers to the damned who will also receive their bodies in which they will suffer the pangs of Hell forever.

1. In the life to come there is neither marriage nor reproduction. We will have a glorified body (See notes in the New Catholic Answer Bible on 1 Cor 15:42-44). Read all of 1 Cor 15.
2. At the moment of our death, our soul will separate from our body and goes before Christ where we are judged. This is the “particular” judgment. This determines where we shall go for all eternity (CCC 1021-1022).
3. There is also a final judgment which will occur when Christ returns (CCC 1038ff). It is at this time that we will receive our resurrected body which will remain with our soul forever.
4. We can get some hints of how our “supernatural” life will be, even before being united with our bodies after the Last Judgment. Dr. Eben Alexander has a fascinating witness to communication that he experienced in heaven. Remember that he is a Harvard trained neurosurgeon describing an experience that he did not previously believe possible.

“Seeing and hearing were not separate in this place where I now was. I could *hear* the visual beauty of the silvery bodies of those scintillating beings above, and I could see the surging, joyful perfection of what they sang. It seemed that you could not look at or listen to anything in this world without becoming a part of it – without joining with it in some mysterious way.”

Each time I posed a question in my mind, “the answer came instantly in an explosion of light, color, love, and beauty that blew through me like a crashing wave. What was important about these bursts was the they didn’t simply silence my questions by overwhelming them. They *answered* them, but in a way that bypassed language. Thoughts entered me directly.”

This seems to me to show how incredibly more profound our existence will be in heaven.

11. What must we do to gain resurrection unto heaven?

1. The most important task for us on earth is to gain eternal life. In order to do this, we need to be in a state of sanctifying grace when we die. To do so we must avoid or confess all mortal sin, seeking the forgiveness that comes only from Christ.
2. It is not enough just to resolve all mortal sin, we must love and serve others, especially the poor (Mt 25:31-46). Notice here that nothing is said about faith. We are also required to help materially those who are in need. There are a number of things we are required to do “in love” in order to be worthy to be saved. A good starting list would be the spiritual and corporal works of mercy (CCC 2447).

12. Consequence for us as a community: Christian beliefs and Christian lifestyle are very important to provide us all support for living this kind of life necessary to gain salvation support. Those who are ignorant and participate in serious evil will be lost unless they come to their senses before God and repent. Are we willing to be the kind of supportive community which will help everyone, adults and children to walk successfully with the Lord?

13. Practical Resolutions

1. We should live as people for whom gaining salvation is the most important goal of our lives. We should not be distracted by materialism, consumerism, physical comforts or pleasures. All these will pass away rather soon. We want that which will give us eternal salvation.
2. Therefore, we should make a serious effort to form our consciences according to the Word of God and the teachings of the Church and then to repent and amend our lives to be consistent with God.