Thirty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

Gospel text (*Lk* 20:27-38): Some Sadducees, those who deny that there is a resurrection, came forward and put this question to him, saying, “Teacher, Moses wrote for us, ‘If someone’s brother dies leaving a wife but no child, his brother must take the wife and raise up descendants for his brother.’ Now there were seven brothers; the first married a woman but died childless. Then the second and the third married her, and likewise all the seven died childless. Finally the woman also died. Now at the resurrection whose wife will that woman be? For all seven had been married to her.”

Jesus said to them, "The children of this age marry and remarry; but those who are deemed worthy to attain to the coming age and to the resurrection of the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. They can no longer die, for they are like angels; and they are the children of God because they are the ones who will rise. That the dead will rise even Moses made known in the passage about the bush, when he called out 'Lord, ' the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob; and he is not God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive."

«He is God of the living and not of the dead, and for him all are alive»

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Today, Jesus makes it clear his claim about resurrection and eternal life. Sadducees doubted, or even worse, they ridiculed the belief in eternal life after death, which was defended —instead— by the Pharisees and we also defend it.

The question the Sadducees asked to Jesus «On the day of the resurrection, to which of them will the woman be wife? For the seven had her as wife?» (Lk 20:33) let us catch sight of a possessive sort of juridical mindset, demanding proprietary rights over a person. Furthermore, the trap set up for Jesus raises an equivocal still existing today: imagining eternal life as an extension, after death, of the earthen existence. Heaven would, thus, consist of the transposition of the beautiful things we now enjoy.

To believe in eternal life is one thing, but to imagine what it will be like is another thing altogether different. When a mystery is not surrounded by respect and discretion, it risks being trivialized by

curiosity and, finally, ridiculed.

Jesus' answer has two parts. In the first one, He tries to make clear that the marriage institution has no reason to be in the other life: «those who are considered worthy of the world to come and of resurrection from the dead, there is no more marriage» (Lk 20:35). What does persists and reaches its maximum fullness is whatever we have sowed in this world as far as authentic love, friendship, fraternity, justice and truth... are concerned.

The second part of the answer leaves two certitudes with us: «For he is God of the living and not of the dead» (Lk 20:38). To trust in this God means to realize we are meant to be alive. And being alive consists of being with Him in a continuous manner, forever. Furthermore, «and for him all are alive» (Lk 20:38): God is the source of life. The believer, submerged in God through the Baptism, has been able to escape forever from the clutches of death. «Love becomes an accomplished fact, if it is included in a love that truly provides eternity» (Benedict XVI).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "(Christ) By dying he submitted to the laws of death, but by rising he abolished them. So he put an end to the hold of death. From being eternal, he made it temporal." (Saint Leo the Great)

- "We are on a journey, on a pilgrimage toward the fullness of life, and that fullness of life is what illumines our journey!" (Francis)

- "To be a witness to Christ is to be a "witness to his Resurrection" (Acts 1:22), to "[have eaten and drunk] with him after he rose from the dead" (Acts 10:41). Encounters with the risen Christ characterize the Christian hope of resurrection. We shall rise like Christ, with him, and through him." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, no. 995)