

32nd Sunday in Ordinary Time - C

If you are thinking that the scenario presented by the Sadducees to trap Jesus is far-fetched, you are not alone!

I'm sure Jesus himself shook his head upon hearing it, and wondered about how goofy people could be.

But the Sadducees had a long-standing grudge, not only with Jesus, but with the Pharisees, with whom Jesus shared the belief about life after death.

The Sadducees did not accept the belief in resurrection to an afterlife. They were strictly conservative when it came to the interpretation of Scripture and held that only the first five books of the Old Testament – the Law of Moses – should be followed.

They tried to get Jesus to have to admit that there could be no resurrection because, if there were, this woman would have seven husbands and that was against the law and couldn't be allowed by God in the life of the world to come.

Of course Jesus saw through their scheme. In his response, Jesus gives an insight into what resurrected life is about.

It is not giving and taking in marriage. That belongs to this life.

It is not about limitation or dying. Resurrected life is about "being alive."

It's worth noting that, when Jesus responds to the Sadducees, he uses a quotation from one of the first five books of the Old Testament.

He quotes the Law of Moses in reminding them that, when Moses encountered God in the desert, God says that he is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, not that he was their God.

Somehow, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are still alive to God, even though they have passed on from this life.

Even though it's hard to figure out what's going on in today's first reading because we only read an excerpt from the longer account, we can get the gist of it.

The mother and her seven sons are all willing to suffer and die for their faith because they trust that God will raise them up again.

The mother says, "...the Creator of the world, who shaped the beginning of man and devised the origin of all things, will in his mercy give life and breath back to you again, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of his laws."

Just as Jesus said, "God...is not God of the dead but of the living, for to him all are alive, here, too, is an acknowledgement that from the

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moment of creation, all are alive in God. All are called to remain alive in God.

Today's readings call to our minds the conclusion of our own years on this earth. They remind us of the unlimited mercy God has for us in this life and that comes to fruition in life with God forever.

The hope we have for eternal life in Jesus Christ is not a "pie in the sky when you die" kind of thing. It's not a "just rough it out here because there will be a big reward in the end."

No, we have God's accompaniment in Christ wherever we are, whether it's this life or the next.

We are assured of this through our baptism into Christ. That's the point in time when we die with Christ so that we may be raised with him.

Because we are human and limited, we may not always have a "sense" of the presence of God as we go through life. In fact, we may be much more aware of how he is absent from us than how he is present.

The same holds true for our sense of the presence of our loved ones who have gone before us.

That doesn't mean that God is not with us and in us. And it doesn't mean that the bonds of love connecting us to our

deceased loved ones have been severed.

Even Jesus, at the end of his earthly life, remembered the psalm that begins with "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"

But that psalm ends with a song of praise to God who "does not turn away from us when we cry out."

In those times when, like the mother and sons in the Second Book of Maccabees, we are confronted with the horror and finality of death, we hang on, trusting in the mercy of God.

Since Christ's coming among us, we now see in him the mercy of God and have firm hope for our continuing life forever in God – with the assurance that he will be with us all along the way.