**32nd Sunday Homily in Ordinary Time Year C**

Let me begin today’s homily with a story of a rabbi in a small Russian town at the beginning of the 20th century. The rabbi was walking across the village square on his way to the Synagogue. The local policeman didn't have much time and like for Jews and he was in a foul mood that morning, he thought he'd take it out on the rabbi and so he yelled out, “hey rabbi where do you think you're going”. The rabbi answered I don't know. That answer infuriated the policeman. What do you mean you don't know? Where you're going every morning at this time, for as long as anyone can remember you have crossed this village square on your way to the synagogue here. Don't tell me you don't know where you're going. Are you trying to make a fool out of me? Well let me teach you a lesson. So the policeman grabbed the rabbi forcibly and marched across the road to the local jail and threw him into a Cell. The rabbi then looked at the policeman and said, “you see officer, I was quite right when I told you that I didn't know where I was going”.

Where are you going? That is a question some of us spend our whole life to answer, avoiding what awaits us beyond the grave. This is an existential question we all might have reflected many times in our life. What is the meaning of life? Is there something beyond this life? Where are we going after our aboard here on earth? The reality of life after death and of the relationship between our lives on earth and the life of glory or punishment that will follow are some of the main themes we encounter in our day today lives.

There is the story about three insurance agents who tried to convince a prospective buyer. The first one, an atheist, said: “Buy my insurance, for its coverage is from basket to casket.” But the Hindu salesman is more persuasive: “That’s nothing! My insurance will cover you from womb to tomb!” Not to be outdone, the third insurance guy, a devout Catholic, offered the widest coverage: “Take mine. It’s from conception to resurrection!”

Life after death; the resurrection; this world and the world of resurrection, ghosts and goblins are an attractive source of stories, novels, and movies. Many famous people have wrestled with the idea of life after death. “If there is no immortality, I shall hurl myself into the sea,” wrote Tennyson. Bismarck was calmer. “Without the hope of an afterlife,” he said, “this life is not even worth the effort of getting dressed in the morning.” Even Freud called the belief that death is the door to a better life “the oldest, strongest and most insistent wish of mankind.”

It is no wonder that we have concern about something so important as life after death. We haven’t experienced it, and it seems to exceed the bounds of reason. But many important things exceed the bounds of reason — our parents’ love, for example, and the trust of children, and genuine friendship — to all of which we give great attention. Now, as we enter into the month of November and of the church year arrives, it is natural for our thoughts to turn to life after death. The main theme of today’s readings is the reality of life after death. The readings invite us to consider the true meaning of the Resurrection in our lives. The first reading states the first century BC Jewish theology of martyrdom and the resurrection of the just.

The resurrection of the dead is the basis of the confrontation described in today’s Gospel passage. The Gospel shows us how Jesus ingeniously escaped from a doctrinal trap set for him and explained the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead which was supported by the Pharisees but denied by the Sadducees. Jesus also explains that heavenly life with God in glory is totally different from earthly life, and that there is no marriage in heaven in the earthly sense. The Sadducees believed in unrestricted free-will and not in fate or Divine Providence. They assumed that we control our own destinies through our personal actions. They rejected the idea of the resurrection, because it was not found in the Torah. Christian belief in immortality, on the other hand, is unique and special.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the Good News of fullness of life in this age and of Resurrection in the age to come. For us death is a door, not a wall — not a wall that ends growth and action like the Berlin wall, but a door into a Christmas—tree room full of surprises. Someone has compared death to standing on the seashore. A ship spreads her white sails to the morning breeze and starts for the open sea. She fades on the horizon, and someone says, “She’s gone.” Just at the moment when someone says, “She’s gone,” other voices who are watching her coming on another shore happily shout, “Here she comes.” Or to use another metaphor, what the caterpillar calls “the end”, the butterfly calls, “the beginning”.

The human situation behind the Gospel story — that is, the attempt to have one’s name remembered and passed on to the future — recognizes a basic human yearning to give life a sense of purpose. All of us have a desire for immortality, which some seek in various surrogate ways. There is the immortality of fame, like that of movie stars whose names live on after death. There is an immortality of influence, like that of rich people who might donate art, politicians who might have a lengthy obituary, and statesmen who have monuments erected in their honor. And there is an immortality of power, usually accomplished through the establishment of foundations or charitable institutions. When in a moment we say the last line of the Creed, “We believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting,” we are asserting our belief that, in a way that no one fully understands, at our resurrection our body joins with our spirit to continue our existence in eternal life.

Today’s Gospel is equally a “Hope raiser” in that Jesus dislodged and flawed the plots of the crafty Sadducees who wished to destroy the foundation of our faith in Christ – The hope of resurrection! This is why Paul insisted that: *“If our hope in Christ is good for this life only, and no more, then we deserve more pity than anyone else in the entire world* (I Cor 15, 19). The concern and fictitious story told by the Sadducees in order to trap Jesus is as good as the ugly situations of life that deceive and lead us into despair, and finally into being afraid of death, thus leading us to seek protection in the things of this world alone rather than in God. It is the same lie that the “Wicked One” poses to us that everything is all about this life. Today, the Church beckons us to hold on tenaciously to the promises of God, in joyful hope for their fulfillment. Let us then pray to God as the Psalmist today: *“Guard me Lord as the apple of your eye. Hide me in the shadow of your wings. As for me, in my justice I shall awake, with the sight of your glory!*

**We need to live as people of the Resurrection**. This means that we are not to lie buried in the tomb of our sins and evil habits. Instead, we are to live joyful and peaceful lives, constantly experiencing the real presence of the Risen Lord. In addition, the hope of our resurrection and eternal life with God provides us with lasting peace and celestial joy to counter the boredom and tension of our day-to-day lives. Cultivating our awareness of the all-pervading Presence of the Spirit of the living God will help us to control our thoughts, desires, words and behavior.

There is a famous **epitaph of Benjamin Franklin**, one of the most important [founding fathers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Founding_Fathers_of_the_United_States) of the United states of America, [author](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Author), [politician](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politician), [printer](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Printer_%28publisher%29), [scientist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scientist), [inventor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inventor), and [diplomat](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diplomat). In one of his lighter moments, Benjamin Franklin penned his own epitaph. It seems he must have been influenced by Paul’s teaching on the resurrection of the body. Here’s what he wrote: “The Body of Benjamin Franklin, the former printer lies here, food for worms, like the cover of an old book: its contents torn out, and stripped of its lettering and gilding. But the work shall not be wholly lost: for it will, as he believed, appear once more in a new and more perfect edition, corrected and amended by its Author”. A Happy Remembrance Day to you all.

*Let me conclude this homily with a poem namely “And Death Shall Have No Dominion” written between the wars in 1933, by Dylan Thomas. This poem takes on a broad theme of remembrance day and the eternity of the human spirit.*

*They shall have stars at elbow and foot;*

*Though they go mad they shall be sane,*

*Though they sink through the sea they shall rise again;*

*Though lovers be lost love shall not;*

*And death shall have no dominion.*