

Homily 32nd Sunday Yr C

In the Jewish culture, before and during the time of Jesus, what we read in the Gospel used to be the custom. If someone's brother dies leaving a wife but no child, his brother must take the wife and raise up children for the brother. Deuteronomy 25:5, "When brothers live together and one of them dies without a son, the widow of the deceased shall not marry anyone outside the family; but her husband's brother shall come to her, marry her and perform the duty of a brother-in-law."

The Sadducees were a Jewish group who did not believe in resurrection and existence of spirits. They emphasized acceptance of written Law alone. They did not accept the new teachings of Jesus because Jesus taught and did things that were not as contained in the written Law.

The Sadducees asked Jesus a question that contained a lot of exaggeration: all seven brothers died childless having married one wife. How could that have happened? However, my understanding of Jesus' reply is that life of resurrection is a time of reward and blessedness. When we meet there, we will not continue our normal family life. St Paul in Philippians 3:21 writes that Jesus Christ "will change our lowly body to conform to his glorified Body." Jesus says in the Gospel that we will be children of the resurrection who will neither marry or given to marriage. One implication of this is that husbands and wives need to enjoy the best of their marriage now, because in the life after, even if we are together, the earthly life will not continue. Over there, there will not be the opportunity to make up! Give the best you can to your marriage now. Also, we are invited to be the best dad now, best mom now, best brother now, best sister now, and best child now. As a priest, I am married to the Church. I must give the Church the best I can now so that I will have nothing to regret. There are people who do not stop regretting and feeling guilty for not being the best they could to someone, and there is no longer the opportunity to make up.

The first reading is about a Jewish family that chose to die instead of going against God's Law. In Christianity people who died for their faith are called martyrs. We may not have opportunity to die a violent death for our faith. The family in the first reading and the martyrs are a challenge to us to defend and witness our Christian faith. We know that the political, economic and social systems are anti religion, anti Christianity and anti Catholic Church, we must therefore stand our ground. The criticisms, attacks and mockery we receive when we stand our ground are blessings. The criticisms, attacks and mockery are a preparation toward life of resurrection in the next life. Jesus says in Matthew 5:12, "Blessed are you when they insult you and persecute you and utter every kind of evil against you falsely because of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in heaven." Why do some Catholics lack confidence, feel shy, want to withdraw, feel afraid, and feel cold. Meanwhile, the children of this world brag about and overshadow us. Till when? Jesus says in Luke 9:26, "For whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels."

FR Martin Eke, MSP